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SYLVIA'S LOVERS.

BY

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Oh for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil! Behind the veil!—TENNYSON.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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SYLVIA'S LOVERS.

CHAPTER I.

A DIFFICULT QUESTION.

PHILIP went to bed with that kind of humble penitent gratitude in his heart, which we sometimes feel after a sudden revulsion of feeling from despondency to hope. The night before it seemed as if all events were so arranged as to thwart him in his dearest wishes; he felt now as if his discontent and repining, not twenty-four hours before, had been almost impious, so great was the change in his circumstances for the better. Now all seemed promising for the fulfilment of what he most desired. He was almost convinced that he was mistaken in thinking that Kinraid had had anything more than a sailor's admiration for a pretty girl with regard to Sylvia; at any rate he was going away to-morrow, in all probability not to return for another year (for

Greenland ships left for the northern seas as soon as there was a chance of the ice being broken up), and ere then he himself might speak out openly, laying before her parents all his fortunate prospects, and before her all his deep passionate love.

So this night his prayers were more than the mere form that they had been the night before; they were a vehement expression of gratitude to God for having, as it were, interfered on his behalf, to grant him the desire of his eyes and the lust of his heart. He was like too many of us, he did not place his future life in the hands of God, and only ask for grace to do His will in whatever circumstances might arise; but he yearned in that terrible way after a blessing which, when granted under such circumstances, too often turns out to be equivalent to a curse. And that spirit brings with it the material and earthly idea that all events that favour our wishes are answers to our prayer: and so they are in one sense, but they need prayer in a deeper and higher spirit to keep us from the temptation to evil which such events invariably bring with them.

Philip little knew how Sylvia's time had been passed that day. If he had he would have lain down this night with even a heavier heart than he had done on the last.

Charley Kinraid accompanied his cousins as far as the spot where the path to Haytersbank Farm diverged. Then he stopped his merry talk, and announced his intention of going to see farmer Robson. Bessy Corney looked disappointed and a little sulky; but her sister Molly Brunton laughed, and said,—

"Tell truth, lad! Dannel Robson 'd niver have a call fra' thee if he hadn't a pretty daughter."

"Indeed, but he would," replied Charley, rather annoyed; "when I've said a thing, I do it. I promised last night to go see him; besides, I like the old man."

"Well! when shall we tell mother yo're comin' whoam?"

"Toward eight o'clock—maybe sooner."

"Why it's bare five now! bless t' lad, does he think o' staying theere a' neet, and they up so late last night, and Mrs. Robson ailing beside? Mother 'll not think it kind on yo' either, will she, Bess?"

"I dunno. Charley mun do as he likes; I daresay no one 'll miss him if he does bide away till eight."

"Well, well! I can't tell what I shall do; but yo'd best not stop lingering here, for it's getting on, and there'll be a keen frost by t' look o' the stars."

Haytersbank was closed for the night as far as it ever was closed; there were no shutters to the windows, nor did they care to draw the inside curtains, so few were the passers-by. The house door was fastened; but the shippen door a little on in the same long low block of building stood open, and a dim light made an oblong upon the snowy ground outside. As Kinraid drew near he heard talking there, and a woman's voice; he threw a passing glance through the window into the fire-lit house-place, and seeing Mrs. Robson asleep by the fire-side in her easy-chair, he went on.

There was the intermittent sound of the sharp whistling of milk into the pail, and Kester, sitting on a three-legged stool, cajoling a capricious cow into letting her fragrant burden flow. Sylvia stood near the farther window-ledge, on which a horn lantern was placed, pretending to knit at a gray worsted stocking, but in reality laughing at Kester's futile endeavours, and finding quite enough to do with her eyes, in keeping herself untouched by the whisking tail, or the occasional kick. The frosty air was mellowed by the warm and odorous breath of the cattle—breath that hung about the place in faint misty clouds. There was only a dim light; such as it was, it was not clearly defined against

the dark heavy shadow in which the old black rafters and manger and partitions were enveloped.

As Charley came to the door, Kester was saying, "Quiet wi' thee, wench! Theere now, she's a beauty, if she'll stand still. There's niver sich a cow i' t' Riding, if she'll only behave hersel'. She's a bonny lass, she is; let down her milk, theere's a pretty!"

"Why, Kester," laughed Sylvia, "thou'rt asking her for her milk wi' as many pretty speeches as if thou wert wooing a wife!"

"Hey, lass!" said Kester, turning a bit towards her, and shutting one eye to cock the other the better upon her; an operation which puckered up his already wrinkled face into a thousand new lines and folds. "An' how does thee know how a man woos a wife, that thee talks so knowin' about it? That's tellin'. Some un's been tryin' it on thee."

"There's niver a one been so impudent," said Sylvia, reddening and tossing her head a little; "I'd like to see 'em try me!"

"Well, well!" said Kester, wilfully misunderstanding her meaning, "thou mun be patient, wench; and if thou's a good lass, maybe thy turn 'll come and they'll try it."

"I wish thou'd talk of what thou's some know-

ledge on, Kester, i'stead of i' that silly way," replied Sylvia.

"Then a mun talk no more 'bout women, for they're past knowin', an' druv e'en King Solomon silly."

At this moment Charley stepped in. Sylvia gave a little start and dropped her ball of worsted. Kester made as though absorbed in his task of cajoling Black Nell; but his eyes and ears were both vigilant.

"I was going into the house, but I saw yo'r mother asleep, and I didn't like to waken her, so I just came on here. Is yo'r father to the fore?"

"No," said Sylvia, hanging down her head a little, wondering if he could have heard the way in which she and Kester had been talking, and thinking over her little foolish jokes with anger against herself. "Father is gone to Winthrop about some pigs as he's heerd on. He'll not be back till seven o'clock or so."

It was but half-past five, and Sylvia in the irritation of the moment believed that she wished Kinraid would go. But she would have been extremely disappointed if he had. Kinraid himself seemed to have no thought of the kind. He saw with his quick eyes, not unaccustomed to women,

that his coming so unexpectedly had fluttered Sylvia, and anxious to make her quite at her ease with him, and not unwilling to conciliate Kester, he addressed his next speech to him, with the same kind of air of interest in the old man's pursuit that a young man of a different class sometimes puts on when talking to the chaperone of a pretty girl in a ball-room.

"That's a handsome beast yo've just been milking, master."

"Ay; but handsome is as handsome does. It were only yesterday as she aimed her leg right at t' pail wi' t' afterings in. She knowed it were afterings as well as any Christian, and t' more t' mischief t' better she likes it; an' if a hadn't been too quick for her, it would have a' gone swash down i' t' litter. This'n 's a far better cow i' t' long run, she's just a steady goer," as the milky down-pour came musical and even from the stall next to Black Nell's.

Sylvia was knitting away vigorously, thinking all the while that it was a great pity she had not put on a better gown, or even a cap with brighter ribbon, and quite unconscious how very pretty she looked standing against the faint light, her head a little bent down; her hair catching bright golden touches,

as it fell from under her little linen cap; her pink bedgown, confined by her apron-string, giving a sort of easy grace to her figure; her dark full linsey petticoat short above her trim ancles, looking far more suitable to the place where she was standing than her long gown of the night before would have done. Kinraid was wanting to talk to her, and to make her talk, but was uncertain how to begin. In the meantime Kester went on with the subject last spoken about.

"Black Nell's at her fourth calf now, so she ought to ha' left off her tricks and turned sober-like. But bless yo', there's some cows as 'll be skittish till they're fat for t' butcher. Not but what a like milking her better nor a steady goer; a man has allays summat to be watchin' for; and a'm kind o' set up when a've mastered her at last. T' young missus theere, she's mighty fond o' comin' t' see Black Nell at her tantrums. She'd niver come near me if a' cows were like this'n."

"Do you often come and see the cows milked?" asked Kinraid.

"Many a time," said Sylvia, smiling a little. "Why, when we're throng, I help Kester; but now we've only Black Nell and Daisy giving milk. Kester knows as I can milk Black Nell quite easy;"

she continued, half vexed that Kester had not named this accomplishment.

"Ay! when she's in a good frame o' mind, as she is sometimes. But t' difficulty is to milk her at all times."

"I wish I'd come a bit sooner. I should like t' have seen you milk Black Nell," addressing Sylvia.

"Yo'd better come to-morrow e'en, and see what a hand she'll mak' on her," said Kester.

"To-morrow night I shall be far on my road back to Shields."

"To-morrow!" said Sylvia, suddenly looking up at him, and then dropping her eyes, as she found he had been watching for the effect of his intelligence on her.

"I mun be back at t' whaler, where I'm engaged," continued he. "She's fitting up after a fresh fashion, and as I've been one as wanted new ways, I mun be on the spot for t' look after her. Maybe I shall take a run down here afore sailing in March. I'm sure I shall try."

There was a good deal meant and understood by these last few words. The tone in which they were spoken gave them a tender intensity not lost upon either of the hearers. Kester cocked his eye once more, but with as little obtrusiveness as he could,

and pondered the sailor's looks and ways. He remembered his coming about the place the winter before, and how the old master had then appeared to have taken to him; but at that time Sylvia had seemed to Kester too little removed from a child to have either art or part in Kinraid's visits; now, however, the case was different. Kester in his sphere—among his circle of acquaintance, narrow though it was — had heard with much pride of Sylvia's bearing away the bell at church and at market, wherever girls of her age were congregated. He was a north countryman, so he gave out no further sign of his feelings than his mistress and Sylvia's mother had done on a like occasion.

"T' lass is weel enough," said he; but he grinned to himself, and looked about, and listened to the hearsay of every lad, wondering who was handsome, and brave, and good enough to be Sylvia's mate. Now, of late, it had seemed to the canny farm-servant pretty clear that Philip Hepburn was "after her;" and to Philip, Kester had an instinctive objection, a kind of natural antipathy such as has existed in all ages between the dwellers in a town and those in the country, between agriculture and trade. So, while Kinraid and Sylvia kept up their half-tender, half-jesting conversation, Kester

was making up his slow persistent mind as to the desirability of the young man then present as a husband for his darling, as much from his being other than Philip in every respect, as from the individual good qualities he possessed. Kester's first opportunity of favouring Kinraid's suit consisted in being as long as possible over his milking; so never were cows that required such "stripping," or were expected to yield such "afterings" as Black Nell and Daisy that night. But all things must come to an end; and at length Kester got up from his three-legged stool, on seeing what the others did not—that the dip-candle in the lantern was coming to an end—and that in two or three minutes more the shippen would be in darkness, and so his pails of milk be endangered. In an instant Sylvia had started out of her delicious dreamland, her drooping eyes were raised, and recovered their power of observation; her ruddy arms were freed from the apron in which she had enfolded them, as a protection from the gathering cold, and she had seized and adjusted the wooden yoke across her shoulders, ready to bear the brimming milk-pails to the dairy.

"Look yo' at her!" exclaimed Kester to Charley, as he adjusted the fragrant pails on the yoke. "She thinks she's missus a'ready, and she's allays for

carrying in t' milk since t' rhumatiz cotched my shouther i' t' back end; and when she says 'Yea,' it's as much as my heed's worth to say, 'Nay.'"

And along the wall, round the corner, down the round slippery stones of the rambling farmyard, behind the buildings, did Sylvia trip, safe, and well-poised, though the ground wore all one coating of white snow, and in many places was so slippery as to oblige Kinraid to linger near Kester, the lantern-bearer. Kester did not lose his opportunity, though the cold misty night air provoked his asthmatic cough whenever he breathed, and often interrupted his words.

"She's a good wench—a good wench as iver was—an' come on a good stock; an' that's summat, whether in a cow or a woman. A've known her from a babby; she's a reet down good un."

By this time they had reached the back kitchen door, just as Sylvia had unladen herself, and was striking a light with flint and tinder. The house seemed warm and inviting after the piercing outer air, although the kitchen into which they entered contained only a raked and slumbering fire at one end, over which, on a crook, hung the immense pan of potatoes cooking for the evening meal of the pigs. To this pan Kester immediately addressed himself,

swinging it round with ease, owing to the admirable simplicity of the old-fashioned machinery. Kinraid stood between Kester and the door into the dairy, through which Sylvia had vanished with the milk. He half wished to conciliate Kester by helping him, but he seemed also attracted, by a force which annihilated his will, to follow her wherever she went. Kester read his mind.

"Let alone, let alone," said he; "pigs' vittle takes noan such dainty carryin' as milk. A may set it down an' niver spill a drop; she's noan fit for t' serve swine, nor yo' other, mester; better help her t' teem t' milk."

So Kinraid followed the light—his light—into the icy chill of the dairy, where the bright polished tin cans were quickly dimmed with the warm, sweet-smelling milk, that Sylvia was emptying out into the brown pans. In his haste to help her, Charley took up one of the pails.

"Eh? that'ns to be strained. Yo' have a' the cow's hair in. Mother's very particular, and cannot abide a hair."

So she went over to her awkward dairymaid, and before she—but not before he—was aware of the sweet proximity, she was adjusting his happy awkward arms to the new office of holding a milk-

strainer over the bowl, and pouring the white liquid through it.

"There!" said she, looking up for a moment, and half blushing; "now yo'll know how to do it next time."

"I wish next time was to come now," said Kinraid; but she had returned to her own pail, and seemed not to hear him. He followed her to her side of the dairy. "I've but a short memory, can yo' not show me again how t' hold t' strainer?"

"No," said she, half laughing, but holding her strainer fast in spite of his insinuating efforts to unlock her fingers. "But there's no need to tell me yo've getten a short memory."

"Why? what have I done? how dun you know it?"

"Last night," she began, and then she stopped, and turned away her head, pretending to be busy in her dairy duties of rinsing and such like.

"Well!" said he, half conjecturing her meaning, and flattered by it, if his conjecture were right. "Last night—what?"

"Oh, yo' know!" said she, as if impatient at being both literally and metaphorically followed about, and driven into a corner.

"No; tell me," persisted he.

"Well," said she, "if yo' will have it, I think yo' showed yo'd but a short memory when yo' didn't know me again, and yo' were five times at this house last winter, and that's not so long sin'. But I suppose yo' see a vast o' things on yo'r voyages by land or by sea, and then it's but natural yo' should forget." She wished she could go on talking, but could not think of anything more to say just then; for, in the middle of her sentence the flattering interpretation he might put upon her words, on her knowing so exactly the number of times he had been to Hayters-bank, flashed upon her, and she wanted to lead the conversation a little farther afield—to make it a little less personal. This was not his wish, however. In a tone which thrilled through her, even in her own despite, he said:

"Do yo' think that can ever happen again, Sylvia?"

She was quite silent; almost trembling. He repeated the question as if to force her to answer. Driven to bay, she equivocated.

"What happen again? Let me go, I dunno what yo're talking about, and I'm a'most numbed wi' cold."

For the frosty air came sharp in through the open lattice window and the ice was already forming on

the milk. Kinraid would have found a ready way of keeping his cousins or indeed most young women warm; but he paused before he dared put his arm round Sylvia; she had something so shy and wild in her look and manner; and her very innocence of what her words, spoken by another girl, might lead to, inspired him with respect, and kept him in check. So he contented himself with saying,

"I'll let yo' go into t' warm kitchen if yo'll tell me if yo' think I can ever forget yo' again."

She looked up at him defiantly, and set her red lips firm. He enjoyed her determination not to reply to this question; it showed she felt its significance. Her pure eyes looked steadily into his; nor was the expression in his such as to daunt her or make her afraid. They were like two children defying each other; each determined to conquer. At last she unclosed her lips, and nodding her head as if in triumph, said, as she folded her arms once more in her check apron:

"Yo'll have to go home sometime."

"Not for a couple of hours yet," said he; "and yo'll be frozen first; so yo'd better say if I can ever forget yo' again, without more ado."

Perhaps the fresh voices breaking on the silence,—perhaps the tones were less modulated than they

had been before, but anyhow Bell Robson's voice was heard calling Sylvia through the second door, which opened from the dairy to the house-place, in which her mother had been till this moment asleep. Sylvia darted off in obedience to the call; glad to leave him, as at the moment Kinraid resentfully imagined. Through the open door he heard the conversation between mother and daughter, almost unconscious of its meaning, so difficult did he find it to wrench his thoughts from the ideas he had just been forming with Sylvia's bright lovely face right under his eyes.

"Sylvia!" said her mother, "who's yonder?" Bell was sitting up in the attitude of one startled out of slumber into intensity of listening; her hands on each of the chair-arms, as if just going to rise. "There's a fremd man i' t' house. I heerd his voice!"

"It's only—it's just Charley Kinraid; he was a-talking to me i' t' dairy."

"I' t' dairy, lass! and how com'd he i' t' dairy?"

"He com'd to see feyther. Feyther asked him last night," said Sylvia, conscious that he could overhear every word that was said, and a little suspecting that he was no great favourite with her mother.

"Thy feyther's out; how com'd he i' t' dairy?" persevered Bell.

"He com'd past this window, and saw yo' asleep, and didn't like for t' waken yo'; so he com'd on to t' shippen, and when I carried t' milk in ——"

But now Kinraid came in, feeling the awkwardness of his situation a little, yet with an expression so pleasant and manly in his open face, and in his exculpatory manner, that Sylvia lost his first words in a strange kind of pride of possession in him, about which she did not reason nor care to define the grounds. But her mother rose from her chair somewhat formally, as if she did not intend to sit down again while he stayed, yet was too weak to be kept in that standing attitude long.

"I'm afeared, sir, Sylvie hasn't told yo' that my master's out, and not like to be in till late. He'll be main and sorry to have missed yo'."

There was nothing for it after this but to go. His only comfort was that on Sylvia's rosy face he could read unmistakable signs of regret and dismay. His sailor's life, in bringing him suddenly face to face with unexpected events, had given him something of that self-possession which we consider the attribute of a gentleman; and with an apparent

calmness which almost disappointed Sylvia, who construed it into a symptom of indifference as to whether he went or stayed, he bade her mother good-night, and only said, in holding her hand a minute longer than was absolutely necessary,

"I'm coming back ere I sail; and then, maybe, yo'll answer yon question."

He spoke low, and her mother was re-arranging herself in her chair, else Sylvia would have had to repeat the previous words. As it was, with soft thrilling ideas ringing through her, she could get her wheel, and sit down to her spinning by the fire; waiting for her mother to speak first, Sylvia dreamt her dreams.

Bell Robson was partly aware of the state of things, as far as it lay on the surface. She was not aware how deep down certain feelings had penetrated into the girl's heart who sat on the other side of the fire, with a little sad air diffused over her face and figure. Bell looked upon Sylvia as still a child, to be warned off forbidden things by threats of danger. But the forbidden thing was already tasted, and possible danger in its full acquisition only served to make it more precious-sweet.

Bell sat upright in her chair, gazing into the fire. Her milk-white linen mob-cap fringed round and

softened her face, from which the usual apple-red was banished by illness, and the features, from the same cause, rendered more prominent and stern. She had a clean buff kerchief round her neck, and stuffed into the bosom of her Sunday woollen gown of dark blue,—if she had been in working-trim she would have worn a bed-gown like Sylvia's. Her sleeves were pinned back at the elbows, and her brown arms and hard-working hands lay crossed in unwonted idleness on her check apron. Her knitting was by her side: and if she had been going through any accustomed calculation or consideration she would have had it busily clinking in her fingers. But she had something quite beyond common to think about, and, perhaps, to speak about; and for the minute she was not equal to knitting.

"Sylvie," she began at length, "did I e'er tell thee on Nancy Hartley as I knew when I were a child? I'm thinking a deal on her to-night; maybe it's because I've been dreaming on yon old times. She was a bonny lass as ever were seen, I've heerd folk say; but that were afore I knew her. When I knew her she were crazy, poor wench; wi' her black hair a-streaming down her back, and her eyes, as were a'most as black, allays crying out for pity, though never a word she spoke but 'He

once was here.' Just that o'er and o'er again, whether she were cold or hot, full or hungry, 'He once was here,' were all her speech. She had been farm-servant to my mother's brother—James Hepburn, thy great-uncle as was; she were a poor, friendless wench, a parish 'prentice, but honest and gaum-like, till a lad, as nobody knowed, come o'er the hills one sheep-shearing fra' Whitehaven; he had summat to do wi' th' sea, though not rightly to be called a sailor: and he made a deal on Nancy Hartley, just to beguile the time like; and he went away and ne'er sent a thought after her more. It's the way as lads have; and there's no holding 'em when they're fellows as nobody knows — neither where they come fro', nor what they've been doing a' their lives, till they come athwart some poor wench like Nancy Hartley. She were but a softy after all: for she left off doing her work in a proper manner. I've heerd my aunt say as she found out as summat was wrong wi' Nancy as soon as th' milk turned bingy, for there ne'er had been such a clean lass about her milk-cans afore that; and from bad it grew to worse, and she would sit and do nothing but play wi' her fingers fro' morn till night, and if they asked her what ailed her, she just said, 'He once was here;' and if they bid her go

about her work, it were a' the same. And when they scolded her, and pretty sharp too, she would stand up and put her hair from her eyes, and look about her like a crazy thing searching for her wits, and ne'er finding them, for all she could think on was just, 'He once was here.' It were a caution to me again thinking a man t' mean what he says when he's a-talking to a young woman."

"But what became on poor Nancy?" asked Sylvia.

"What should become on her or on any lass as gives hersel' up to thinking on a man who cares nought for her?" replied her mother, a little severely. "She were crazed, and my aunt couldn't keep her on, could she? She did keep her a long weary time, thinking as she would, maybe, come to hersel', and, anyhow, she were a motherless wench. But at length she had for t' go where she came fro'—back to Keswick workhouse: and when last I heerd on her she were chained to th' great kitchen dresser i' t' workhouse; they'd beaten her till she were taught to be silent and quiet i' th' daytime, but at night, when she were left alone, she would take up th' oud cry, till it wrung their heart so they'd many a time to come down and beat her again to get any peace. It were a caution to me, as I said

afore, to keep fro' thinking on men as thought nought on me."

"Poor crazy Nancy!" sighed Sylvia. The mother wondered if she had taken the "caution" to herself, or was only full of pity for the mad girl, dead long before.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

"As the day lengthens so the cold strengthens." It was so that year; the hard frost which began on New Year's Eve lasted on and on into late February, black and bitter, but welcome enough to the farmers, as it kept back the too early growth of autumn-sown wheat, and gave them the opportunity of leading manure. But it did not suit invalids as well, and Bell Robson, though not getting worse, did not make any progress towards amendment. Sylvia was kept very busy, notwithstanding that she had the assistance of a poor widow-woman in the neighbourhood on cleaning, or washing, or churning days. Her life was quiet and monotonous although hard-working; and while her hands mechanically found and did their accustomed labour, the thoughts that rose in her head always centred on Charley Kinraid, his ways, his words, his looks, whether they all meant what she would fain believe

they did, and whether, meaning love at the time, such a feeling was likely to endure. Her mother's story of crazy Nancy had taken hold of her; but not as a "caution," rather as a parallel case to her own. Like Nancy, and borrowing the poor girl's own words, she would say softly to herself, "He once was here;" but all along she believed in her heart he would come back again to her, though it touched her strangely to imagine the agonies of forsaken love.

Philip knew little of all this. He was very busy with facts and figures, doggedly fighting through the necessary business, and only now and then allowing himself the delicious relaxation of going to Haytersbank in an evening, to inquire after his aunt's health, and to see Sylvia; for the two Fosters were punctiliously anxious to make their shopmen test all their statements; insisting on an examination of the stock, as if Hepburn and Coulson were strangers to the shop; having the Monkshaven auctioneer in to appraise the fixtures, and necessary furniture; going over the shop books for the last twenty years with their successors, an employment which took up evening after evening; and not unfrequently taking one of the young men on the long commercial journeys which were tediously made in a gig. By degrees both Hepburn and

Coulson were introduced to distant manufacturers and wholesale dealers. They would have been willing to take the Fosters' word for every statement the brothers had made on New Year's Day; but this, it was evident, would not have satisfied their masters, who were scrupulous in insisting that whatever advantage there was should always fall on the side of the younger men.

When Philip saw Sylvia she was always quiet and gentle; perhaps more silent than she had been a year ago, and she did not attend so briskly to what was passing around her. She was rather thinner and paler; but whatever change there was in her was always an improvement in Philip's eyes, so long as she spoke graciously to him. He thought she was suffering from long-continued anxiety about her mother, or that she had too much to do; and either cause was enough to make him treat her with a grave regard and deference which had a repressed tenderness in it, of which she, otherwise occupied, was quite unaware. She liked him better, too, than she had done a year or two before, because he did not show her any of the eager attention which teased her then, although its meaning was not fully understood.

Things were much in this state when the frost broke, and milder weather succeeded. This was the time so long looked forward to by the invalid and her friends, as favouring the doctor's recommendation of change of air. Her husband was to take her to spend a fortnight with a kindly neighbour, who lived near the farm they had occupied, forty miles or so inland, before they came to Haytersbank. The widow-woman was to come and stay in the house, to keep Sylvia company, during her mother's absence. Daniel, indeed, was to return home after conveying his wife to her destination; but there was so much to be done on the land at this time of the year, that Sylvia would have been alone all day had it not been for the arrangement just mentioned.

There was active stirring in Monkshaven harbour as well as on shore. The whalers were finishing their fittings-out for the Greenland seas. It was a "close" season, that is to say, there would be difficulty in passing the barrier of ice which lay between the ships and the whaling-grounds; and yet these must be reached before June, or the year's expedition would be of little avail. Every blacksmith's shop rung with the rhythmical clang of busy hammers, beating out old iron, such as horse-shoes,

nails or stubs, into the great harpoons; the quays were thronged with busy and important sailors, rushing hither and thither, conscious of the demand in which they were held at this season of the year. It was war time too. Many captains unable to procure men in Monkshaven would have to complete their crews in the Shetlands. The shops in the town were equally busy; stores had to be purchased by the whaling-masters, warm clothing of all sorts to be provided. These were the larger wholesale orders; but many a man, and woman, too, brought out their small hoards to purchase extra comforts, or precious keepsakes for some beloved one. It was the time of the great half-yearly traffic of the place; another impetus was given to business when the whalers returned in the autumn, and the men were flush of money, and full of delight at once more seeing their homes and their friends.

There was much to be done in Fosters' shop, and later hours were kept than usual. Some perplexity or other was occupying John and Jeremiah Foster; their minds were not so much on the alert as usual, being engaged on some weighty matter of which they had as yet spoken to no one. But it thus happened that they did not give the prompt

assistance they were accustomed to render at such times; and Coulson had been away on some of the new expeditions devolving on him and Philip as future partners. One evening after the shop was closed, while they were examining the goods, and comparing the sales with the entries in the day-book, Coulson suddenly inquired,—

"By the way, Hester, does thee know where the parcel of best bandanas is gone? There was four left, as I'm pretty sure, when I set off to Sandsend; and to-day Mark Alderson came in, and would fain have had one, and I could find none nowhere."

"I sold t' last to-day, to yon sailor, the speck-sioneer, who fought the press-gang same time as poor Darley were killed. He took it, and three yards of yon pink ribbon wi' t' black and yellow crosses on it, as Philip could never abide. Philip has got 'em i' t' book, if he'll only look."

"Is he here again?" said Philip; "I didn't see him. What brings him here, where he's noan wanted?"

"T' shop were throng wi' folk," said Hester, "and he knew his own mind about the handkercher, and didn't tarry long. Just as he was leaving, his eye caught on t' ribbon, and he came back for it.

It were when yo' were serving Mary Darby and there was a vast o' folk about yo'."

"I wish I'd seen him," said Coulson. "I'd ha' gi'en him a word and a look he'd not ha' forgotten in a hurry."

"Why, what's up?" said Philip, surprised at William's unusual manner, and, at the same time, rather gratified to find a reflection of his own feelings about Kinraid. Coulson's face was pale with anger, but for a moment or two he seemed uncertain whether he would reply or not.

"Up!" said he at length. "It's just this: he came after my sister for better nor two year; and a better lass—no, nor a prettier i' my eyes—niver broke bread. And then my master saw another girl, that he liked better"—William almost choked in his endeavour to keep down all appearance of violent anger, and then went on, "and that he played t' same game wi', as I've heerd tell."

"And how did thy sister take it?" asked Philip, eagerly.

"She died in a six-month," said William; "*she* forgived him, but it's beyond me. I thought it were him when I heerd of t' work about Darley; Kinraid—and coming fra' Newcassel, where Annie lived 'prentice—and I made inquiry, and it were t'

same man. But I'll say no more about him, for it stirs t' old Adam more nor I like, or is fitting."

Out of respect to him, Philip asked no more questions, although there were many things that he fain would have known. Both Coulson and he went silently and grimly through the remainder of their day's work. Independent of any personal interest which either or both of them had or might have in Kinraid's being a light o' love, this fault of his was one with which the two grave, sedate young men had no sympathy. Their hearts were true and constant, whatever else might be their failings; and it is no new thing to "damn the faults we have no mind to." Philip wished that it was not so late, or that very evening he would have gone to keep guard over Sylvia in her mother's absence—nay, perhaps he might have seen reason to give her a warning of some kind. But, if he had done so, it would have been locking the stable-door after the steed was stolen. Kinraid had turned his steps towards Haytersbank Farm as soon as ever he had completed his purchases. He had only come that afternoon to Monkshaven, and for the sole purpose of seeing Sylvia once more before he went to fulfil his engagement as specksioneer in the *Urania*, a whaling-vessel

that was to sail from North Shields on Thursday morning, and this was Monday.

Sylvia sat in the house-place, her back to the long low window, in order to have all the light the afternoon hour afforded for her work. A basket of her father's unmended stockings was on the little round table beside her, and one was on her left hand, which she supposed herself to be mending; but from time to time she made long pauses, and looked in the fire; and yet there was but little motion of flame or light in it out of which to conjure visions. It was "redd up" for the afternoon; covered with a black mass of coal, over which the equally black kettle hung on the crook. In the back-kitchen Dolly Reid, Sylvia's assistant during her mother's absence, chanted a lugubrious ditty, befitting her condition as a widow, while she cleaned tins, and cans, and milking-pails. Perhaps these bustling sounds prevented Sylvia from hearing approaching footsteps coming down the brow with swift advance; at any rate, she started and suddenly stood up as some one entered the open door. It was strange she should be so much startled, for the person who entered had been in her thoughts all during those long pauses. Charley Kinraid and the story of crazy Nancy had been the subjects for

her dreams for many a day, and many a night. Now he stood there, bright and handsome as ever, with just that much timidity in his face, that anxiety as to his welcome, which gave his accost an added charm, could she but have perceived it. But she was so afraid of herself, so unwilling to show what she felt, and how much she had been thinking of him in his absence, that her reception seemed cold and still. She did not come forward to meet him; she went crimson to the very roots of her hair; but that, in the waning light, he could not see; and she shook so that she felt as if she could hardly stand; but the tremor was not visible to him. She wondered if he remembered the kiss that had passed between them on New Year's Eve—the words that had been spoken in the dairy on New Year's Day; the tones, the looks, that had accompanied those words. But all she said was—

"I didn't think to see yo'. I thought yo'd ha' sailed."

"I told yo' I should come back, didn't I?" said he, still standing, with his hat in his hand, waiting to be asked to sit down; and she, in her bashfulness, forgetting to give the invitation, but, instead, pretending to be attentively mending the stocking she held. Neither could keep quiet and silent long.

She felt his eyes were upon her, watching every motion, and grew more and more confused in her expression and behaviour. He was a little taken aback by the nature of his reception, and was not sure at first whether to take the great change in her manner, from what it had been when last he saw her, as a favourable symptom or otherwise. By-and-by, luckily for him, in some turn of her arm to reach the scissors on the table, she caught the edge of her work-basket, and down it fell. She stooped to pick up the scattered stockings and ball of worsted, and so did he; and when they rose up, he had fast hold of her hand, and her face was turned away, half ready to cry.

"What ails yo' at me?" said he, beseechingly. "Yo' might ha' forgotten me; and yet I thought we made a bargain against forgetting each other." No answer. He went on: "Yo've never been out o' my thoughts, Sylvia Robson; and I'm come back to Monkshaven for nought but to see you once and again afore I go away to the northern seas. It's not two hour sin' I landed at Monkshaven, and I've been near neither kith nor kin as yet; and now I'm here you won't speak to me."

"I don't know what to say," said she, in a low, almost inaudible tone. Then hardening herself, and

resolving to speak as if she did not understand his only half-expressed meaning, she lifted up her head, and all but looking at him—while she wrenched her hand out of his—she said: "Mother's gone to Middleham for a visit, and feyther's out i' t' plough-field wi' Kester; but he'll be in afore long."

Charley did not speak for a minute or so. Then he said—

"Yo're not so dull as to think I'm come all this way for t' see either your father or your mother. I've a great respect for 'em both; but I'd hardly ha' come all this way for to see 'em, and me bound to be back i' Shields, if I walk every step of the way, by Wednesday night. It's that yo' won't understand my meaning, Sylvia; it's not that yo' don't, or that yo' can't." He made no effort to repossess himself of her hand. She was quite silent, but in spite of herself she drew long hard breaths. "I may go back to where I came from," he went on. "I thought to go to sea wi' a blessed hope to cheer me up, and a knowledge o' some one as loved me as I'd left behind; some one as loved me half as much as I did her; for th' measure o' my love toward her is so great and mighty, I'd be content wi' half as much from her, till I'd taught her to

love me more. But if she's a cold heart and cannot care for a honest sailor, why, then, I'd best go back at once."

He made for the door. He must have been pretty sure from some sign or other, or he would never have left it to her womanly pride to give way, and for her to make the next advance. He had not taken two steps when she turned quickly towards him, and said something — the echo of which, rather than the words themselves, reached him.

"I didn't know yo' cared for me; yo' niver said so." In an instant he was back at her side, his arm round her in spite of her short struggle, and his eager passionate voice saying, "Yo' never knowed I loved you, Sylvia? say it again, and look i' my face while yo' say it, if yo' can. Why, last winter I thought yo'd be such a woman when yo'd come to be one as my een had never looked upon, and this year, ever sin' I saw yo' i' the kitchen corner sitting crouching behind my uncle, I as good as swore I'd have yo' for wife, or never wed at all. And it was not long ere yo' knowed it, for all yo' wert so coy, and now yo' have the face—no, yo' have not the face—come, my darling, what is it?" for she was crying; and on his turning

her wet blushing face towards him the better to look at it, she suddenly hid it in his breast. He lulled and soothed her in his arms, as if she had been a weeping child and he her mother; and then they sat down on the settle together, and when she was more composed they began to talk. He asked her about her mother; not sorry in his heart at Bell Robson's absence. He had intended if necessary to acknowledge his wishes and desires with regard to Sylvia to her parents; but for various reasons he was not sorry that circumstances had given him the chance of seeing her alone, and obtaining her promise to marry him without being obliged to tell either her father or her mother at present. "I ha' spent my money pretty free," he said, "and I've ne'er a penny to the fore, and yo'r parents may look for something better for yo', my pretty: but when I come back fro' this voyage I shall stand a chance of having a share i' th' *Urania*, and maybe I shall be mate as well as specksioneer; and I can get a matter of from seventy to ninety pound a voyage, let alone th' half-guineas for every whale I strike, and six shilling a gallon on th' oil; and if I keep steady wi' Forbes and Company, they'll make me master i' time, for I've had good schooling, and can work a ship as well as any man; an' I leave yo' wi'

yo'r parents, or take a cottage for yo' nigh at hand; but I would like to have something to the fore, and that I shall have, please God, when we come back i' th' autumn. I shall go to sea happy, now, thinking I've yo'r word. Yo're not one to go back from it, I'm sure, else it's a long time to leave such a pretty girl as yo', and ne'er a chance of a letter reaching yo' just to tell yo' once again how I love yo', and to bid yo' not forget yo'r true love."

"There'll be no need o' that," murmured Sylvia.

She was too dizzy with happiness to have attended much to his details of his worldly prospects, but at the sound of his tender words of love her eager heart was ready to listen.

"I don't know," said he, wanting to draw her out into more confession of her feelings. "There's many a one ready to come after yo'; and yo'r mother is not o'er captivated wi' me; and there's yon tall fellow of a cousin as looks black at me, for if I'm not mista'en he's a notion of being sweet on yo' hisself."

"Not he," said Sylvia, with some contempt in her tone. "He's so full o' business and t' shop, and o' makin' money, and gettin' wealth."

"Ay, ay; but perhaps when he gets a rich man he'll come and ask my Sylvia to be his wife, and what will she say then?"

"He'll niver come asking such a foolish question," said she, a little impatiently; "he knows what answer he'd get if he did."

Kinraid said, almost as if to himself, "Yo'r mother favours him though." But she, weary of a subject she cared nothing about, and eager to identify herself with all his interests, asked him about his plans almost at the same time that he said these last words; and they went on as lovers do, intermixing a great many tender expressions with a very little conversation relating to facts.

Dolly Reid came in, and went out softly, unheeded by them. But Sylvia's listening ears caught her father's voice, as he and Kester returned homewards from their day's work in the plough-field; and she started away, and fled upstairs in shy affright, leaving Charley to explain his presence in the solitary kitchen to her father.

He came in, not seeing that any one was there at first; for they had never thought of lighting a candle. Kinraid stepped forward into the firelight; his purpose of concealing what he had said to Sylvia quite melted away by the cordial welcome

her father gave him the instant that he recognized him.

"Bless thee, lad! who'd ha' thought o' seein' thee? Why, if iver a thought on thee at all, it were half way to Davis' Straits. To be sure, t' winter's been a dree season, and thou'rt, maybe, i' t' reet on 't to mak' a late start. Latest start as iver I made was ninth o' March, an' we struck thirteen whales that year."

"I've something to say to you," said Charley, in a hesitating voice, so different to his usual hearty way, that Daniel gave him a keen look of attention before he began to speak. And, perhaps, the elder man was not unprepared for the communication that followed. At any rate, it was not unwelcome. He liked Kinraid, and had strong sympathy not merely with what he knew of the young sailor's character, but with the life he led, and the business he followed. Robson listened to all he said with approving nods and winks, till Charley had told him everything he had to say; and then he turned and struck his broad horny palm into Kinraid's as if concluding a bargain, while he expressed in words his hearty consent to their engagement. He wound up with a chuckle, as the thought struck him that this great piece of

business, of disposing of their only child, had been concluded while his wife was away.

"A'm noane so sure as t' missus 'll like it," said he; "tho' whativer she'll ha' to say again it, mischief only knows. But she's noane keen on matterimony; though a have made her as good a man as there is in a' t' Ridings. Anyhow, a'm master, and that she knows. But maybe, for t' sake o' peace an' quietness — tho' she's niver a scolding tongue, that a will say for her—we'n best keep this matter to oursels till thou comes int' port again. T' lass upstairs 'll like nought better than t' curl hersel' round a secret, and purr o'er it, just as t' oud cat does o'er her blind kitten. But thou'll be wanting to see t' lass, a'll be bound. An oud man like me isn't as good company as a pretty lass." Laughing a low rich laugh over his own wit, Daniel went to the bottom of the stairs, and called, "Sylvie, Sylvie! come down, lass! a's reet; come down!"

For a time there was no answer. Then a door was unbolted, and Sylvia said,

"I can't come down again. I'm noane comin' down again to-night."

Daniel laughed the more at this, especially when he caught Charley's look of disappointment.

"Hearken how she's bolted her door! She'll noane come near us this neet. Eh! but she's a stiff little 'un; she's been our only one, and we'n mostly let her have her own way. But we'll have a pipe and a glass; and that, to my thinking, is as good company as iver a woman i' Yorkshire."

CHAPTER III.

REJECTED WARNINGS.

The post arrived at Monkshaven three times in the week; sometimes, indeed, there were not a dozen letters in the bag, which was brought thither by a man in a light mail-cart, who took the better part of a day to drive from York; dropping private bags here and there on the moors, at some squire's lodge, or road-side inn. Of the number of letters that arrived in Monkshaven, the Fosters, shop-keepers and bankers, had the largest share.

The morning succeeding the day on which Sylvia had engaged herself to Kinraid, the Fosters seemed unusually anxious to obtain their letters. Several times Jeremiah came out of the parlour in which his brother John was sitting in expectant silence, and, passing through the shop, looked up and down the market-place in search of the old lame woman, who was charitably employed to deliver letters, and who must have been lamer than ever this

morning, to judge from the lateness of her coming. Although none but the Fosters knew the cause of their impatience for their letters, yet there was such tacit sympathy between them and those whom they employed, that Hepburn, Coulson, and Hester were all much relieved when the old woman at length appeared with her basket of letters.

One of these seemed of especial consequence to the good brothers. They each separately looked at the direction, and then at one another; and without a word they returned with it unread into the parlour, shutting the door, and drawing the green silk curtain close, the better to read it in privacy.

Both Coulson and Philip felt that something unusual was going on, and were, perhaps, as full of consideration as to the possible contents of this London letter, as of attention to their more immediate business. But fortunately there was little doing in the shop. Philip, indeed, was quite idle when John Foster opened the parlour-door, and, half doubtfully, called him into the room. As the door of communication shut the three in, Coulson felt himself a little aggrieved. A minute ago Philip and he were on a level of ignorance, from which the former was evidently going to be raised. But

he soon returned to his usual state of acquiescence in things as they were, which was partly constitutional, and partly the result of his Quaker training.

It was apparently by John Foster's wish that Philip had been summoned. Jeremiah, the less energetic and decided brother, was still discussing the propriety of the step when Philip entered.

"No need for haste, John; better not call the young man till we have further considered the matter."

But the young man was there in presence; and John's will carried the day.

It seemed from his account to Philip (explanatory of what he, in advance of his brother's slower judgment, thought to be a necessary step) that the Fosters had for some time received anonymous letters, warning them, with distinct meaning, though in ambiguous terms, against a certain silk-manufacturer in Spitalfields, with whom they had had straightforward business dealings for many years; but to whom they had latterly advanced money. The letters hinted at the utter insolvency of this manufacturer. They had urged their correspondent to give them his name in confidence, and this morning's letter had brought it; but the name was totally unknown to them, though there

seemed no reason to doubt the reality of either it or the address, the latter of which was given in full. Certain circumstances were mentioned regarding the transactions between the Fosters and this manufacturer, which could be known only to those who were in the confidence of one or the other; and to the Fosters the man was, as has been said, a perfect stranger. Probably, they would have been unwilling to incur the risk they had done on this manufacturer Dickinson's account, if it had not been that he belonged to the same denomination as themselves, and was publicly distinguished for his excellent and philanthropic character; but these letters were provocative of anxiety, especially since this morning's post had brought out the writer's full name, and various particulars showing his intimate knowledge of Dickinson's affairs.

After much perplexed consultation, John had hit upon the plan of sending Hepburn to London to make secret inquiries respecting the true character and commercial position of the man whose creditors, not a month ago, they had esteemed it an honour to be.

Even now Jeremiah was ashamed of their want of confidence in one so good; he believed that the information they had received would all prove a

mistake, founded on erroneous grounds, if not a pure invention of an enemy; and he had only been brought partially to consent to the sending of Hepburn, by his brother's pledging himself that the real nature of Philip's errand should be unknown to any human creature, save them three.

As all this was being revealed to Philip, he sat apparently unmoved and simply attentive. In fact, he was giving all his mind to understanding the probabilities of the case, leaving his own feelings in the background till his intellect should have done its work. He said little; but what he did say was to the point, and satisfied both brothers. John perceived that his messenger would exercise penetration and act with energy; while Jeremiah was soothed by Philip's caution in not hastily admitting the probability of any charge against Dickinson, and in giving full weight to his previous good conduct and good character.

Philip had the satisfaction of feeling himself employed on a mission which would call out his powers, and yet not exceed them. In his own mind he forestalled the instructions of his masters, and was silently in advance of John Foster's plans and arrangements, while he appeared to listen to all that was said with quiet business-like attention.

It was settled that the next morning he was to make his way northwards to Hartlepool, whence he could easily proceed either by land or sea to Newcastle, from which place smacks were constantly sailing to London. As to his personal conduct and behaviour there, the brothers overwhelmed him with directions and advice; nor did they fail to draw out of the strong box in the thick wall of their counting-house a more than sufficient sum of money for all possible expenses. Philip had never had so much in his hands before, and hesitated to take it, saying it was more than he should require; but they repeated, with fresh urgency, their warnings about the terrible high prices of London, till he could only resolve to keep a strict account, and bring back all that he did not expend, since nothing but his taking the whole sum would satisfy his employers.

When he was once more behind the counter, he had leisure enough for consideration as far as Coulson could give it him. The latter was silent, brooding over the confidence which Philip had apparently received, but which was withheld from him. He did not yet know of the culminating point—of Philip's proposed journey to London; that great city of London, which, from its very inaccessibility fifty years ago, loomed so magnificent through the mist

of men's imaginations. It is not to be denied that Philip felt exultant at the mere fact of "going to London." But then again, the thought of leaving Sylvia; of going out of possible daily reach of her; of not seeing her for a week—a fortnight; nay, he might be away for a month,—for no rash hurry was to mar his delicate negotiation,—gnawed at his heart, and spoilt any enjoyment he might have anticipated from gratified curiosity, or even from the consciousness of being trusted by those whose trust and regard he valued. The sense of what he was leaving grew upon him the longer he thought on the subject; he almost wished that he had told his masters earlier in the conversation of his unwillingness to leave Monkshaven for so long a time; and then again he felt that the gratitude he owed them quite prohibited his declining any task they might impose, especially as they had more than once said that it would not do for them to appear in the affair, and yet that to no one else could they entrust so difficult and delicate a matter. Several times that day, as he perceived Coulson's jealous sullenness, he thought in his heart that the consequence of the excessive confidence for which Coulson envied him was a burden from which he would be thankful to be relieved.

As they all sat at tea in Alice Rose's house-place, Philip announced his intended journey; a piece of intelligence he had not communicated earlier to Coulson because he rather dreaded the increase of dissatisfaction it was sure to produce, and of which he knew the expression would be restrained by the presence of Alice Rose and her daughter.

"To Lunnon!" exclaimed Alice.

Hester said nothing.

"Well! some folks has the luck!" said Coulson.

"Luck!" said Alice, turning sharp round on him. "Niver let me hear such a vain word out o' thy mouth, laddie, again. It's the Lord's doing, and luck's the devil's way o' putting it. Maybe it's to try Philip he's sent there; happen it may be a fiery furnace to him; for I've heerd tell it's full o' temptations, and he may fall into sin—and then where'd be the 'luck' on it? But why art ta gonig? and the morning, say'st thou? Why, thy best shirt is in t' suds, and no time for t' starch and iron it. Whatten the great haste as should take thee to Lunnon wi'out thy ruffled shirt?"

"It's none o' my doing," said Philip; "there's business to be done, and John Foster says I'm to do it; and I'm to start to-morrow."

"I'll not turn thee out wi'out thy ruffled shirt, if I sit up a' neet," said Alice, resolutely.

"Niver fret thyself, mother, about t' shirt," said Philip. "If I need a shirt, London's not what I take it for if I can't buy mysel' one ready-made."

"Hearken to him!" said Alice. "He speaks as if buying o' ready-made shirts were nought to him, and he wi' a good half-dozen as I made mysel'. Eh, lad? but if that's the frame o' mind thou'rt in, Lunnon is like for to be a sore place o' temptation. There's pitfalls for men, and traps for money at ivery turn, as I've heerd say. It would ha' been better if John Foster had sent an older man on his business, whativer it be."

"They seem to make a deal o' Philip all on a sudden," said Coulson. "He's sent for, and talked to i' privacy, while Hester and me is left i' t' shop for t' bear t' brunt o' t' serving."

"Philip knows," said Hester, and then, somehow, her voice failed her and she stopped.

Philip paid no attention to this half-uttered sentence; he was eager to tell Coulson, as far as he could do so without betraying his master's secret, how many drawbacks there were to his proposed journey, in the responsibility which it involved, and his unwillingness to leave Monkshaven: he said—

"Coulson, I'd give a deal it were thou that were going, and not me. At least, there is many a time I'd give a deal. I'll not deny but at other times I'm pleased at the thought on't. But, if I could I'd change places wi' thee at this moment."

"It's fine talking," said Coulson, half mollified, and yet not caring to show it. "I make no doubt it were an even chance betwixt us two at first, which on us was to go; but somehow thou got the start and thou's stuck to it till it's too late for aught but to say thou's sorry."

"Nay, William," said Philip, rising, "it's an ill look-out for the future, if thee and me is to quarrel, like two silly wenches, o'er each bit o' pleasure, or what thou fancies to be pleasure, as falls in t' way of either on us. I've said truth to thee, and played thee fair, and I've got to go to Hayters-bank for to wish 'em good-by, so I'll not stay longer here to be misdoubted by thee."

He took his cap and was gone, not heeding Alice's shrill inquiry as to his clothes and his ruffled shirt. Coulson sat still, penitent and ashamed; at length he stole a look at Hester. She was playing with her teaspoon, but he could see that she was choking down her tears; he could not choose but force her to speak with an ill-timed question.

"What's to do, Hester?" said he.

She lifted up those eyes, usually so soft and serene; now they were full of the light of indignation shining through tears.

"To do!" she said; "Coulson, I'd thought better of thee, going and doubting and envying Philip, as niver did thee an ill turn, or said an ill word, or thought an ill thought by thee; and sending him away out o' t' house this last night of all, maybe, wi' thy envyings and jealousy."

She hastily got up and left the room. Alice was away looking up Philip's things for his journey. Coulson remained alone, feeling like a guilty child, but dismayed by Hester's words, even more than by his own regret at what he had said.

Philip walked rapidly up the hill-road towards Haytersbank. He was chafed and excited by Coulson's words, and the events of the day. He had meant to shape his life, and now it was, as it were, being shaped for him, and yet he was reproached for the course it was taking, as much as though he were an active agent; accused of taking advantage over Coulson, his intimate companion for years; he who esteemed himself above taking an unfair advantage over any man! His feeling on the subject was akin to that of Hazael,

"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

His feelings, disturbed on this one point, shook his judgment off its balance on another. The resolution he had deliberately formed of not speaking to Sylvia on the subject of his love till he could announce to her parents the fact of his succession to Fosters' business, and till he had patiently, with long-continuing and deep affection, worked his way into her regard, was set aside during the present walk. He would speak to her of his passionate attachment, before he left, for an uncertain length of time, and the certain distance of London. And all the modification on this point which his judgment could obtain from his impetuous and excited heart was, that he would watch her words and manner well when he announced his approaching absence, and if in them he read the slightest token of tender regretful feeling, he would pour out his love at her feet, not even urging the young girl to make any return, or to express the feelings of which he hoped the germ was already budding in her. He would be patient with her; he could not be patient himself. His heart beating, his busy mind rehearsing the probable coming scene, he turned into the field-path that led to Haytersbank.

Coming along it, and so meeting him, advanced Daniel Robson, in earnest talk with Charley Kinraid. Kinraid, then, had been at the farm; Kinraid had been seeing Sylvia, her mother away. The thought of poor dead Annie Coulson flashed into Philip's mind. Could he be playing the same game with Sylvia? Philip set his teeth and tightened his lips at the thought of it. They had stopped talking, they had seen him already, or his impulse would have been to dodge behind the wall and avoid them; even though one of his purposes in going to Haytersbank had been to bid his uncle farewell.

Kinraid took him by surprise from the hearty greeting he gave him, and which Philip would fain have avoided. But the specksioneer was full of kindliness towards all the world, especially towards all Sylvia's friends, and, convinced of her great love towards himself, had forgotten any previous jealousy of Philip. Secure and exultant, his broad, handsome, weather-bronzed face was as great a contrast to Philip's long, thoughtful, sallow countenance, as his frank manner was to the other's cold reserve. It was some minutes before Hepburn could bring himself to tell the great event that was about to befall him before this third person whom he considered as an intrusive stranger. But as Kinraid

seemed to have no idea of going on, and as there really was no reason why he and all the world should not know of Philip's intentions, he told his uncle that he was bound for London the next day on business connected with the Fosters.

Daniel was deeply struck with the fact that he was talking to a man setting off for London at a day's notice.

"Thou'll niver tell me this hasn't been brewin' longer nor twelve hours; thou's a sly close chap, and we hannot seen thee this se'nnight; thou'll ha' been thinkin' on this, and cogitatin' it, maybe, a' that time."

"Nay," said Philip, "I knew nought about it last night; its none o' my doing, going, for I'd liefer ha' stayed where I am."

"Yo'll like it when once yo're there," said Kinraid, with a travelled air of superiority, as Philip fancied.

"No, I shan't," he replied, shortly. "Liking has nought to do with it."

"An' yo' knew nought about it last neet," continued Daniel, musingly. "Well, life's soon o'er; else when I were a young fellow, folks made their wills afore goin' to Lunnon."

"Yet I'll be bound to say yo' niver made a will before going to sea," said Philip, half smiling.

"Na, na; but that's quite another mak' o' thing; goin' to sea comes natteral to a man, but goin' to Lunnon,—I were once there, and were near deafened wi' t' throng and t' sound. I were but two hours i' t' place, though our ship lay a fortneet off Gravesend."

Kinraid now seemed in a hurry; but Philip was stung with curiosity to ascertain his movements, and suddenly addressed him:

"I heard yo' were i' these parts. Are yo' for staying here long?"

There was a certain abruptness in Philip's tone, if not in his words, which made Kinraid look in his face with surprise, and answer with equal curtness.

"I'm off i' th' morning; and sail for the north seas day after."

He turned away, and began to whistle, as if he did not wish for any further conversation with his interrogator. Philip, indeed, had nothing more to say to him: he had learned all he wanted to know.

"I'd like to bid good-by to Sylvie. Is she at home?" he asked of her father.

"A'm thinking thou'll not find her. She'll be off to Yesterbarrow t' see if she'd get a settin' o' their eggs; her grey speckled hen is cluckin', and nought 'll serve our Sylvia but their eggs to set

her upon. But, for a' that, she mayn't be gone yet. Best go on and see for thysel'."

So they parted; but Philip had not gone many steps before his uncle called him back, Kinraid slowly loitering on meanwhile. Robson was fumbling among some dirty papers he had in an old leather case, which he had produced out of his pocket.

"Fact is, Philip, t' pleugh's in a bad way, gearin' and a', an' folk is talkin' on a new kind o' mak'; and if thou's bound for York ——"

"I'm not going by York; I'm going by a Newcastle smack."

"Newcassel—Newcassel—it's pretty much t' same. Here, lad, thou can read print easy; it's a bit as was cut out on a papper; there's Newcassel, and York, and Durham, and a vast more towns named, wheere folk can learn a' about t' new mak' o' pleugh."

"I see," said Philip, "'Robinson, Side, Newcastle, can give all requisite information.'"

"Ay, ay," said Robson; "thou's hit t' marrow on t' matter. Now, if thou'rt i' Newcassel, thou can learn all about it; thou'rt little better nor a woman, for sure, bein' mainly acquaint wi' ribbons, but they'll tell thee—they'll tell thee, lad; and write down what they sayn, and what's to be t' price, and look sharp as to what kind o' folk they are as

sells 'em, an' write and let me know. Thou'll be i' Newcassel to-morrow, maybe? Well, then I'll reckon to hear fro' thee in a week, or, mayhap, less,—for t' land is backward, and I'd like to know about t' pleughs. I'd a month's mind to write to Brunton, as married Molly Corney, but writin' is more i' thy way an' t' parson's nor mine; and if thou sells ribbons, Brunton sells cheese, and that's no better."

Philip promised to do his best, and to write word to Robson, who, satisfied with his willingness to undertake the commission, bade him go on and see if he could not find the lass. Her father was right in saying that she might not have set out for Yesterbarrow. She had talked about it to Kinraid and her father in order to cover her regret at her lover's accompanying her father to see some new kind of harpoon about which the latter had spoken. But as soon as they had left the house, and she had covertly watched them up the brow in the field, she sate down to meditate and dream about her great happiness in being beloved by her hero, Charley Kinraid. No gloomy dread of his long summer's absence; no fear of the cold, glittering icebergs bearing mercilessly down on the *Urania*, nor shuddering anticipation of the dark waves of

evil import, crossed her mind. He loved her, and that was enough. Her eyes looked, trance-like, into a dim, glorious future of life; her lips, still warm and reddened by his kiss, were just parted in a happy smile, when she was startled by the sound of an approaching footstep—a footstep quite familiar enough for her to recognize it, and which was unwelcome now, as disturbing her in the one blessed subject of thought in which alone she cared to indulge.

"Well, Philip! an' what brings *yo'* here?" was her rather ungracious greeting.

"Why, Silvie, are yo' sorry to see me?" asked Philip, reproachfully. But she turned it off with assumed lightness.

"Oh, yes," said she. "I've been wanting yo' this week past wi' t' match to my blue ribbon yo' said yo'd get and bring me next time yo' came."

"I've forgotten it, Sylvie. It's clean gone out of my mind," said Philip, with true regret. "But I've had a deal to think on," he continued, penitently, as if anxious to be forgiven. Sylvia did not want his penitence, did not care for her ribbon, was troubled by his earnestness of manner—but he knew nothing of all that; he only knew that she whom he loved had asked him to do something for

her, and he had neglected it; so, anxious to be excused and forgiven, he went on with the apology she cared not to hear.

If she had been less occupied with her own affairs, less engrossed with deep feeling, she would have reproached him, if only in jest, for his carelessness. As it was, she scarcely took in the sense of his words.

"You see, Sylvie, I've had a deal to think on; before long I intend telling yo' all about it; just now I'm not free to do it. And when a man's mind is full o' business, most particular when it's other folks's as is trusted to him, he seems to lose count on the very things he'd most care for at another time." He paused a little.

Sylvia's galloping thoughts were pulled suddenly up by his silence; she felt that he wanted her to say something, but she could think of nothing besides an ambiguous

"Well?"

"And I'm off to London i' t' morning," added he, a little wistfully, almost as if beseeching her to show or express some sorrow at a journey, the very destination of which showed that he would be absent for some time.

"To Lunnon!" said she, with some surprise.

"Yo're niver thinking o' going to live theere, for sure!"

Surprise, and curiosity, and wonder; nothing more, as Philip's instinct told him. But he reasoned that first correct impression away with ingenious sophistry.

"Not to live there: only to stay for some time. I shall be back, I reckon, in a month or so."

"Oh! that's nought of a going away," said she, rather petulantly. "Them as goes to t' Greenland seas has to bide away for six months and more," and she sighed.

Suddenly a light shone down into Philip's mind. His voice was changed as he spoke next.

"I met that good-for-nothing chap, Kinraid, wi' yo'r father just now. He'll ha' been here, Sylvie?"

She stooped for something she had dropped, and came up red as a rose.

"To be sure; what then?" And she eyed him defiantly, though in her heart she trembled, she knew not why.

"What then? and yo'r mother away. He's no company for such as thee, at no time, Sylvie."

"Feyther and me chooses our own company, without iver asking leave o' yo'," said Sylvia, hastily arranging the things in the little wooden

work-box that was on the table, preparatory to putting it away. At the time, in his agitation, he saw, but did not affix any meaning to it, that the half of some silver coin was among the contents thus turned over before the box was locked.

"But thy mother wouldn't like it, Sylvie; he's played false wi' other lasses, he'll be playing thee false some o' these days, if thou lets him come about thee. He went on wi' Annie Coulson, William's sister, till he broke her heart; and sin then he's been on wi' others."

"I dunnot believe a word on 't," said Sylvia, standing up, all aflame.

"I niver telled a lie i' my life," said Philip, almost choking with grief at her manner to him, and the regard for his rival which she betrayed. "It were Willie Coulson as telled me, as solemn and serious as one man can speak to another; and he said it weren't the first nor the last time as he had made his own game with young women."

"And how dare yo' come here to me wi' yo'r backbiting tales?" said Sylvia, shivering all over with passion.

Philip tried to keep calm, and to explain.

"It were yo'r own mother, Sylvia, as knowed yo' had no brother, or any one to see after yo';

and yo' so pretty, so pretty, Sylvia," he continued, shaking his head, sadly, "that men run after yo' against their will, as one may say; and yo'r mother bade me watch o'er ye and see what company yo' kept, and who was following after yo', and to warn yo', if need were."

"My mother niver bade yo' to come spying after me, and blaming me for seeing a lad as my feyther thinks well on. An' I don't believe a word about Annie Coulson; an' I'm not going to suffer yo' to come wi' yo'r tales to me; say 'em out to his face, and hear what he'll say to yo'."

"Sylvie, Sylvie," cried poor Philip, as his offended cousin rushed past him, and upstairs to her little bed-room, where he heard the sound of the wooden bolt flying into its place. He could hear her feet pacing quickly about through the unceiled rafters. He sate still in despair, his head buried in his two hands. He sate till it grew dusk, dark; the wood fire, not gathered together by careful hands, died out into grey ashes. Dolly Reid had done her work and gone home. There were but Philip and Sylvia in the house. He knew he ought to be going home, for he had much to do, and many arrangements to make. Yet it seemed as though he could not stir. At length he raised his stiffened

body, and stood up, dizzy. Up the little wooden stairs he went, where he had never been before, to the small square landing, almost filled up with the great chest for oat-cake. He breathed hard for a minute, and then knocked at the door of Sylvia's room.

"Sylvie! I'm going away; say good-by." No answer. Not a sound heard. "Sylvie!" (a little louder, and less hoarsely spoken). There was no reply. "Sylvie! I shall be a long time away; perhaps I may niver come back at all;" here he bitterly thought of an unregarded death. "Say good-by." No answer. He waited patiently. Can she be wearied out, and gone to sleep, he wondered. Yet once again—"Good-by, Sylvie, and God bless yo'! I'm sorry I vexed yo'."

No reply.

With a heavy, heavy heart he creaked down the stairs, felt for his cap, and left the house.

"She's warned, any way," thought he. Just at that moment the little casement window of Sylvia's room was opened, and she said—

"Good-by, Philip!"

The window was shut again as soon as the words were spoken. Philip knew the uselessness of remaining; the need for his departure; and yet he stood

still for a little time like one entranced, as if his will had lost all power to compel him to leave the place. Those two words of hers, which two hours before would have been so far beneath his aspirations, had now power to re-light hope, to quench reproach or blame.

"She's but a young lassie," said he to himself; "an' Kinraid has been playing wi' her, as such as he can't help doing, once they get among t' women. An' I came down sudden on her about Annie Coulson, and touched her pride. Maybe, too, it were ill-advised to tell her how her mother was feared for her. I couldn't ha' left the place to-morrow if he'd been biding here; but he's off for half a year or so, and I'll be home again as soon as iver I can. In half a year such as he forgets, if iver he's thought serious about her; but in a' my lifetime, if I live to fourscore, I can niver forget. God bless her for saying, 'Good-by, Philip.'" He repeated the words aloud in fond mimicry of her tones: "Good-by, Philip."

CHAPTER IV.

EDDY IN LOVE'S CURRENT.

The next morning shone bright and clear, if ever a March morning did. The beguiling month was coming in like a lamb, with whatever storms it might go raging out. It was long since Philip had tasted the freshness of the early air on the shore, or in the country, as his employment at the shop detained him in Monkshaven till the evening. And as he turned down the quays (or staithes) on the north side of the river, towards the shore, and met the fresh sea-breeze blowing right in his face, it was impossible not to feel bright and elastic. With his knapsack slung over his shoulder, he was prepared for a good stretch towards Hartlepool, whence a coach would take him to Newcastle before night. For seven or eight miles the level sands were as short and far more agreeable a road than the up and down land-ways. Philip walked on pretty briskly, unconsciously enjoying the sunny

landscape before him; the crisp curling waves rushing almost up to his feet, on his right hand, and then swishing back over the fine small pebbles into the great swelling sea. To his left were the cliffs rising one behind another, having deep gullies here and there between, with long green slopes upward from the land, and then sudden falls of brown and red soil or rock deepening to a yet greater richness of colour at their base towards the blue ocean before him. The loud, monotonous murmur of the advancing and receding waters lulled him into dreaminess; the sunny look of everything tinged his day-dreams with hope. So he trudged merrily over the first mile or so; not an obstacle to his measured pace on the hard, level pavement; not a creature to be seen since he had left the little gathering of bare-legged urchins dabbling in the sea-pools near Monkshaven. The cares of land were shut out by the glorious barrier of rocks before him. There were some great masses that had been detached by the action of the weather, and lay half embedded in the sand, draperied over by the heavy pendent olive-green sea-weed. The waves were nearer at this point; the advancing sea came up with a mighty distant length of roar; here and there the smooth swell was lashed by the fret against unseen rocks into

white breakers; but otherwise the waves came up from the German Ocean upon that English shore with a long steady roll that might have taken its first impetus far away, in the haunts of the sea-serpent on the coast of "Norroway over the foam." The air was soft as May; right overhead the sky was blue, but it deadened into grey near the sea lines. Flocks of seagulls hovered about the edge of the waves, slowly rising and turning their white under-plumage to glimmer in the sunlight as Philip approached. The whole scene was so peaceful, so soothing, that it dispelled the cares and fears (too well founded in fact) which had weighed down on his heart during the dark hours of the past night.

There was Haytersbank gully opening down its green entrance among the warm brown bases of the cliffs. Below, in the sheltered brushwood, among the last year's withered leaves, some primroses might be found. He half thought of gathering Sylvia a posy of them, and rushing up to the farm to make a little farewell peace-offering. But on looking at his watch, he put all thoughts of such an action out of his head; it was above an hour later than he had supposed, and he must make all haste on to Hartlepool. Just as he was approaching this gully, a man

came dashing down, and ran out some way upon the sand with the very force of his descent; then he turned to the left and took the direction of Hartlepool a hundred yards or so in advance of Philip. He never stayed to look round him, but went swiftly and steadily on his way. By the peculiar lurch in his walk—by everything—Philip knew it was the speck-sioneer, Kinraid.

Now the road up Haytersbank gully led to the farm, and nowhere else. Still any one wishing to descend to the shore might do so by first going up to the Robsons' house, and skirting the walls till they came to the little slender path down to the shore. But by the farm, by the very house-door they must of necessity pass. Philip slackened his pace, keeping under the shadow of the rock. By-and-by Kinraid, walking on the sunlit open sands, turned round and looked long and earnestly towards Haytersbank gully. Hepburn paused when he paused, but as intently as he looked at some object above, so intently did Hepburn look at him. No need to ascertain by sight towards whom his looks, his thoughts were directed. He took off his hat and waved it, touching one part of it as if with particular meaning. When he turned away at last, Hepburn heaved a heavy sigh, and crept yet more into the cold dank shadow.

of the cliffs. Each step was now a heavy task, his sad heart tired and weary. After a while he climbed up a few feet, so as to mingle his form yet more completely with the stones and rocks around. Stumbling over the uneven and often jagged points, slipping on the sea-weed, plunging into little pools of water left by the ebbing tide in some natural basins, he yet kept his eyes fixed as if in fascination on Kinraid, and made his way almost alongside of him. But the last hour had pinched Hepburn's features into something of the wan haggardness they would wear when he should first be lying still for ever.

And now the two men were drawing near a creek, about eight miles from Monkshaven. The creek was formed by a beck (or small stream) that came flowing down from the moors, and took its way to the sea between the widening rocks. The melting of the snows and running of the flooded water-springs above made this beck in the early spring-time both deep and wide. Hepburn knew that here they both must take a path leading inland to a narrow foot-bridge about a quarter of a mile up the stream; indeed from this point, owing to the jutting out of the rocks, the land path was the shortest; and this way lay by the water-side at an angle right below the cliff to which Hepburn's steps

were leading him. He knew that on this long level field path he might easily be seen by any one following; nay, if he followed any one at a short distance, for it was full of turnings; and he resolved, late as he was, to sit down for a while till Kinraid was far enough in advance for him to escape being seen. He came up to the last rock behind which he could be concealed; seven or eight feet above the stream he stood, and looked cautiously for the speck-sioneer. Up by the rushing stream he looked, then right below.

"It is God's providence," he murmured. "It is God's providence."

He crouched down where he had been standing and covered his face with his hands. He tried to deafen as well as to blind himself, that he might neither hear nor see anything of the coming event of which he, an inhabitant of Monkshaven at that day, well understood the betokening signs.

Kinraid had taken the larger angle of the sands before turning up towards the bridge. He came along now nearing the rocks. By this time he was sufficiently buoyant to whistle to himself. It steeled Philip's heart to what was coming to hear his rival whistling, "Weel may the keel row," so soon after parting with Sylvia.

The instant Kinraid turned the corner of the cliff, the ambush was upon him. Four man-of-war's men sprang on him and strove to pinion him.

"In the King's name!" cried they, with rough, triumphant jeers.

Their boat was moored not a dozen yards above; they were sent by the tender of a frigate lying off Hartlepool for fresh water. The tender was at anchor just beyond the jutting rocks in face.

They knew that fishermen were in the habit of going to and from their nets by the side of the creek; but such a prize as this active, strong, and evidently superior sailor, was what they had not hoped for, and their endeavours to secure him were in proportion to the value of the prize.

Although taken by surprise, and attacked by so many, Kinraid did not lose his wits. He wrenched himself free, crying out loud:

"Avast, I'm a protected whaler. I claim my protection. I've my papers to show, I'm bonded speck-sioneer to the *Urania* whaler, Donkin captain, North Shields port."

As a protected whaler, the press-gang had, by the 17th section of Act 26 Geo. III. no legal right to seize him, unless he had failed to return to his ship by the

10th of March following the date of his bond. But of what use were the papers he hastily dragged out of his breast; of what use were laws in those days of slow intercourse with such as were powerful enough to protect, and in the time of popular panic against a French invasion?

"D—n your protection," cried the leader of the press-gang; "come and serve his Majesty, that's better than catching whales."

"Is it though?" said the specksioneer, with a motion of his hand, which the swift-eyed sailor opposed to him saw and interpreted rightly.

"Thou wilt, wilt thou? Close with him, Jack; and ware the cutlass."

In a minute his cutlass was forced from him, and it became a hand-to-hand struggle, of which, from the difference in numbers, it was not difficult to foretell the result. Yet Kinraid made desperate efforts to free himself; he wasted no breath in words, but fought, as the men said, "like a very devil."

Hepburn heard loud pants of breath, great thuds, the dull struggle of limbs on the sand, the growling curses of those who thought to have managed their affair more easily; the sudden cry of some one wounded, not Kinraid he knew, Kinraid would have

borne any pain in silence at such a moment; another wrestling, swearing, infuriated strife, and then a strange silence. Hepburn sickened at the heart; was then his rival dead? had he left this bright world? lost his life—his love? For an instant Hepburn felt guilty of his death; he said to himself he had never wished him dead, and yet in the struggle he had kept aloof, and now it might be too late for ever. Philip could not bear the suspense; he looked stealthily round the corner of the rock behind which he had been hidden, and saw that they had overpowered Kinraid, and, too exhausted to speak, were binding him hand and foot to carry him to their boat.

Kinraid lay as still as any hedgehog: he rolled when they pushed him; he suffered himself to be dragged without any resistance, any motion; the strong colour brought into his face while fighting was gone now, his countenance was livid pale; his lips were tightly held together, as if it cost him more effort to be passive, wooden, and stiff in their hands than it had done to fight and struggle with all his might. His eyes seemed the only part about him that showed cognizance of what was going on. They were watchful, vivid, fierce as those of a wild cat brought to bay, seeking in its desperate

quickened brain for some mode of escape not yet visible, and in all probability never to become visible to the hopeless creature in its supreme agony.

Without a motion of his head, he was perceiving and taking in everything while he lay bound at the bottom of the boat. A sailor sat by his side, who had been hurt by a blow from him. The man held his head in his hand, moaning; but every now and then he revenged himself by a kick at the prostrate specksioneer, till even his comrades stopped their cursing and swearing at their prisoner for the trouble he had given them, to cry shame on their comrade. But Kinraid never spoke, nor shrank from the outstretched foot.

One of his captors, with the successful insolence of victory, ventured to jeer him on the supposed reason for his vehement and hopeless resistance.

He might have said yet more insolent things; the kicks might have hit harder; Kinraid did not hear or heed. His soul was beating itself against the bars of inflexible circumstance; reviewing in one terrible instant of time what had been, what might have been, what was. Yet while these thoughts thus stabbed him, he was still mechanically looking out for chances. He moved his head a little, so as to turn towards Haytersbank, where Sylvia must be

quickly, if sadly, going about her simple daily work; and then his quick eye caught Hepburn's face, blanched with excitement rather than fear, watching eagerly from behind the rock, where he had sat breathless during the affray and the impressment of his rival.

"Come here, lad!" shouted the specksioneer as soon as he saw Philip, heaving and writhing his body the while with so much vigour that the sailors started away from the work they were engaged in about the boat, and held him down once more, as if afraid he should break the strong rope that held him like withes of green flax. But the bound man had no such notion in his head. His mighty wish was to call Hepburn near that he might send some message by him to Sylvia. "Come here, Hepburn," he cried again, falling back this time so weak and exhausted that the man-of-war's men became sympathetic.

"Come down, peeping Tom, and don't be afeared," they called out.

"I'm not afeared," said Philip; "I'm no sailor for yo' t' impress me: nor have yo' any right to take that fellow; he's a Greenland specksioneer, under protection, as I know and can testify."

"Yo' and yo'r testify go hang. Make haste,

man, and hear what this gem'man, as was in a dirty blubbery whale-ship, and is now in his Majesty's service, has got to say. I dare say, Jack," went on the speaker, "it's some message to his sweetheart, asking her to come for to serve on board ship along with he, like Billy Taylor's young woman."

Philip was coming towards them slowly, not from want of activity, but because he was undecided what he should be called upon to do or to say by the man whom he hated and dreaded, yet whom just now he could not help admiring.

Kinraid groaned with impatience at seeing one, free to move with quick decision, so slow and dilatory.

"Come on then," cried the sailors, "or we'll take you too on board,. and run you up and down the main-mast a few times. Nothing like life aboard ship for quickening a land-lubber."

"Yo'd better take him and leave me," said Kinraid, grimly. "I've been taught my lesson; and seemingly he has his yet to learn."

"His Majesty isn't a schoolmaster to need scholars; but a jolly good captain to need men," replied the leader of the gang, eyeing Philip nevertheless, and questioning within himself how

far, with only two other available men, they durst venture on his capture as well as the specksioneer's. It might be done, he thought, even though there was this powerful captive aboard, and the boat to manage too; but, running his eye over Philip's figure, he decided that the tall stooping fellow was never cut out for a sailor, and that he should get small thanks if he captured him, to pay him for the possible risk of losing the other. Or else the mere fact of being a landsman was of as little consequence to the press-gang, as the protecting papers which Kinraid had vainly showed.

"Yon fellow wouldn't have been worth his grog this many a day, and be d—d to you," said he, catching Hepburn by the shoulder, and giving him a push. Philip stumbled over something in this, his forced run. He looked down; his foot had caught in Kinraid's hat, which had dropped off in the previous struggle. In the band that went round the low crown, a ribbon was knotted; a piece of that same ribbon which Philip had chosen out, with such tender hope, to give to Sylvia for the Corneys' party on New Year's Eve. He knew every delicate thread that made up the briar-rose pattern; and a spasm of hatred towards Kinraid contracted his heart. He had been almost

relenting into pity for the man captured before his eyes; now he abhorred him.

Kinraid did not speak for a minute or two. The sailors, who had begun to take him into favour, were all agog with curiosity to hear the message to his sweetheart, which they believed he was going to send. Hepburn's perceptions, quickened with his vehement agitation of soul, were aware of this feeling of theirs; and it increased his rage against Kinraid, who had exposed the idea of Sylvia to be the subject of ribald whispers. But the specksioneer cared little what others said or thought about the maiden, whom he yet saw before his closed eyelids as she stood watching him, from the Haytersbank gully, waving her hands, her handkerchief, all in one passionate farewell.

"What do yo' want wi' me?" asked Hepburn at last, in a gloomy tone. If he could have helped it, he would have kept silence till Kinraid spoke first; but he could no longer endure the sailors' nudges, and winks, and jests among themselves.

"Tell Sylvia," said Kinraid——

"There's a smart name for a sweetheart," exclaimed one of the men; but Kinraid went straight on,

"What yo've seen; how I've been pressed by this cursed gang."

"Civil words, messmate, if you please. Sylvia can't abide cursing and swearing, I'm sure. We're gentlemen serving his Majesty on board the *Alcestis*, and this proper young fellow shall be helped on to more honour and glory than he'd ever get bobbing for whales. Tell Sylvia this, with my love; Jack Carter's love, if she's anxious about my name."

One of the sailors laughed at this rude humour; another bade Carter hold his stupid tongue. Philip hated him in his heart. Kinraid hardly heard him. He was growing faint with the heavy blows he had received, the stunning fall he had met with, and the reaction from his dogged self-control at first.

Philip did not speak nor move.

"Tell her," continued Kinraid, rousing himself for another effort, "what yo've seen. Tell her I'll come back to her. Bid her not forget the great oath we took together this morning; she's as much my wife as if we'd gone to church;—I'll come back and marry her afore long."

Philip said something inarticulately.

"Hurra!" cried Carter, "and I'll be best man. Tell her, too, that I'll have an eye on her sweet-

heart, and keep him from running after other girls."

"Yo'll have yo'r hands full then," muttered Philip, his passion boiling over at the thought of having been chosen out from among all men to convey such a message as Kinraid's to Sylvia.

"Make an end of yo'r d—d yarns, and be off," said the man who had been hurt by Kinraid, and who had sate apart and silent till now.

Philip turned away; Kinraid raised himself and cried after him,—

"Hepburn, Hepburn! tell her——" what he added Philip could not hear, for the words were lost before they reached him in the outward noise of the regular splash of the oars and the rush of the wind down the gully, with which mingled the closer sound that filled his ears of his own hurrying blood surging up into his brain. He was conscious that he had said something in reply to Kinraid's adjuration that he would deliver his message to Sylvia, at the very time when Carter had stung him into fresh anger by the allusion to the possibility of the specksioneer's "running after other girls," for, for an instant, Hepburn had been touched by the contrast of circumstances. Kinraid an hour or two ago,—Kinraid a banished man; for in those days, an impressed sailor might linger out

years on some foreign station, far from those he loved, who all this time remained ignorant of his cruel fate.

But Hepburn began to wonder what he himself had said—how much of a promise he had made to deliver those last passionate words of Kinraid's. He could not recollect how much, how little he had said; he knew he had spoken hoarsely and low almost at the same time as Carter had uttered his loud joke. But he doubted if Kinraid had caught his words.

And then the dread Inner Creature, who lurks in each of our hearts, arose and said, "It is as well: a promise given is a fetter to the giver. But a promise is not given when it has not been received."

At a sudden impulse, he turned again towards the shore when he had crossed the bridge, and almost ran towards the verge of the land. Then he threw himself down on the soft fine turf that grew on the margin of the cliffs overhanging the sea, and commanding an extent of view towards the north. His face supported by his hands, he looked down upon the blue rippling ocean, flashing here and there, into the sunlight in long, glittering lines. The boat was still in the distance, making her swift

silent way with long regular bounds to the tender that lay in the offing.

Hepburn felt insecure, as in a nightmare dream, so long as the boat did not reach her immediate destination. His contracted eyes could see four minute figures rowing with ceaseless motion, and a fifth sate at the helm. But he knew there was a sixth, unseen, lying, bound and helpless, at the bottom of the boat; and his fancy kept expecting this man to start up and break his bonds, and overcome all the others, and return to the shore—free and triumphant.

It was by no fault of Hepburn's that the boat sped well away; that she was now alongside the tender, dancing on the waves; now emptied of her crew; now hoisted up to her place. No fault of his! and yet it took him some time before he could reason himself into the belief that his mad, feverish wishes not an hour before—his wild prayer to be rid of his rival, as he himself had scrambled onward over the rocks alongside of Kinraid's path on the sands—had not compelled the event.

"Anyhow," thought he, as he rose up, "my prayer is granted. God be thanked!"

Once more he looked out towards the ship. She had spread her beautiful great sails, and was standing

out to sea in the glittering path of the descending sun.

He saw that he had been delayed on his road, and had lingered long. He shook his stiffened limbs, shouldered his knapsack, and prepared to walk on to Hartlepool as swiftly as he could.

CHAPTER V.

AN IMPORTANT MISSION.

PHILIP was too late for the coach he had hoped to go by, but there was another that left at night, and which reached Newcastle in the forenoon, so that, by the loss of a night's sleep, he might overtake his lost time. But, restless and miserable, he could not stop in Hartlepool longer than to get some hasty food at the inn from which the coach started. He acquainted himself with the names of the towns through which it would pass, and the inns at which it would stop, and left word that the coachman was to be on the look-out for him and pick him up at some one of these places.

He was thoroughly worn out before this happened —too much tired to gain any sleep in the coach. When he reached Newcastle, he went to engage his passage in the next London-bound smack, and then directed his steps to Robinson's, in the Side, to

make all the inquiries he could think of respecting the plough his uncle wanted to know about.

So it was pretty late in the afternoon, indeed almost evening, before he arrived at the small inn on the quay-side, where he intended to sleep. It was but a rough kind of place, frequented principally by sailors; he had been recommended to it by Daniel Robson, who had known it well in former days. The accommodation in it was, however, clean and homely, and the people keeping it were respectable enough in their way.

Still Hepburn was rather repelled by the appearance of the sailors who sate drinking in the bar, and he asked, in a low voice, if there was not another room. The woman stared in surprise, and only shook her head. Hepburn went to a separate table, away from the roaring fire, which on this cold March evening was the great attraction, and called for food and drink. Then seeing that the other men were eyeing him with the social idea of speaking to him, he asked for pen and ink and paper, with the intention of defeating their purpose by pre-occupation on his part. But when the paper came, the new pen, the unused thickened ink, he hesitated long before he began to write; and at last he slowly put down the words,—

"DEAR AND HONOURED UNCLE,"——

There was a pause; his meal was brought and hastily swallowed. Even while he was eating it he kept occasionally touching up the letters of these words. When he had drunk a glass of ale he began again to write; fluently this time, for he was giving an account of the plough. Then came another long stop; he was weighing in his own mind what he should say about Kinraid. Once he thought for a second of writing to Sylvia herself, and telling her —— how much? She might treasure up her lover's words like grains of gold, while they were lighter than dust in their meaning to Philip's mind; words which such as the specksioneer used as counters to beguile and lead astray silly women. It was for him to prove his constancy by action; and the chances of his giving such proof were infinitesimal in Philip's estimation. But should the latter mention the bare fact of Kinraid's impressment to Robson? That would have been the natural course of things, remembering that the last time Philip had seen either, they were in each other's company. Twenty times he put his pen to the paper with the intention of relating briefly the event that had befallen Kinraid; and as often he stopped as though the first word would be irrevocable. While he thus

sate pen in hand, thinking himself wiser than conscience, and looking on beyond the next step which she bade him take into an indefinite future, he caught some fragments of the sailors' talk at the other end of the room, which made him listen to their words. They were speaking of that very Kinraid, the thought of whom filled his own mind like an actual presence. In a rough, careless way they spoke of the specksioneer, with admiration enough for his powers as a sailor and harpooner; and from that they passed on to jesting mention of his power amongst women, and one or two girls' names were spoken of in connection with him. Hepburn silently added Annie Coulson and Sylvia Robson to this list, and his cheeks turned paler as he did so. Long after they had done speaking about Kinraid, after they had paid their shot, and gone away, he sate in the same attitude, thinking bitter thoughts.

The people of the house prepared for bed. Their silent guest took no heed of their mute signs. At length the landlord spoke to him, and he started, gathered his wits together with an effort, and prepared to retire with the rest. But before he did so, he signed and directed the letter to his uncle, leaving it still open, however, in case some sudden feeling

should prompt him to add a postscript. The landlord volunteered the information that the letter his guest had been writing must be posted early the next morning if it was going south; as the mails in that direction only left Newcastle every other day.

All night long Hepburn wearied himself with passionate tossings, prompted by stinging recollection. Towards morning he fell into a dead sound sleep. He was roused by a hasty knocking at the door. It was broad full daylight; he had overslept himself, and the smack was leaving by the early tide. He was even now summoned on board. He dressed, wafered his letter, and rushed with it to the neighbouring post-office; and, without caring to touch the breakfast for which he paid, he embarked. Once on board, he experienced the relief which it always is to an undecided man, and generally is at first to any one who has been paltering with duty, when circumstances decide for him. In the first case, it is pleasant to be relieved from the burden of decision; in the second, the responsibility seems to be shifted on to impersonal events.

And so Philip sailed out of the mouth of the Tyne on to the great open sea. It would be a week before the smack reached London, even if she pursued a tolerably straight course, but she had

to keep a sharp look-out after possible impressment of her crew; and it was not until after many dodges and some adventures that, at the end of a fortnight from the time of his leaving Monkshaven, Philip found himself safely housed in London, and ready to begin the delicate piece of work which was given him to do.

He felt himself fully capable of unravelling each clue to information, and deciding on the value of the knowledge so gained. But during the leisure of the voyage he had wisely determined to communicate everything he learnt about Dickinson, in short, every step he took in the matter, by letter to his employers. And thus his mind both in and out of his lodgings might have appeared to have been fully occupied with the concerns of others.

But there were times when the miserable luxury of dwelling upon his own affairs was his—when he lay down in his bed till he fell into restless sleep—when the point to which his steps tended in his walks was ascertained. Then he gave himself up to memory, and regret which often deepened into despair, and but seldom was cheered by hope.

He grew so impatient of the ignorance in which he was kept—for in those days of heavy postage any correspondence he might have had on mere Monks-

haven intelligence was very limited—as to the affairs at Haytersbank, that he cut out an advertisement respecting some new kind of plough, from a newspaper that lay in the chop-house where he usually dined, and rising early the next morning he employed the time thus gained in going round to the shop where these new ploughs were sold.

That night he wrote another letter to Daniel Robson, with a long account of the merits of the implements he had that day seen. With a sick heart and a hesitating hand, he wound up with a message of regard to his aunt and to Sylvia; an expression of regard which he dared not make as warm as he wished, and which, consequently, fell below the usual mark attained by such messages, and would have appeared to any one who cared to think about it as cold and formal.

When this letter was despatched, Hepburn began to wonder what he had hoped for in writing it. He knew that Daniel could write—or rather that he could make strange hieroglyphics, the meaning of which puzzled others and often himself; but these pen-and-ink signs were seldom employed by Robson, and never, so far as Philip knew, for the purpose of letter-writing. But still he craved so for news of Sylvia—even for a sight of paper which she had seen,

and perhaps touched—that he thought all his trouble about the plough (to say nothing of the one-and-twopence postage which he had prepaid in order to make sure of his letter's reception in the frugal household at Haytersbank) well lost for the mere chance of his uncle's caring enough for the intelligence to write in reply, or even to get some friend to write an answer; for in such case, perhaps, Philip might see her name mentioned in some way, even though it was only that she sent her duty to him.

But the post-office was dumb; no letter came from Daniel Robson. Philip heard, it is true, from his employers pretty frequently on business; and he felt sure they would have named it, if any ill had befallen his uncle's family, for they knew of the relationship and of his intimacy there. They generally ended their formal letters with as formal a summary of Monkshaven news; but there was never a mention of the Robsons, and that of itself was well, but it did not soothe Philip's impatient curiosity. He had never confided his attachment to his cousin to any one, it was not his way; but he sometimes thought that if Coulson had not taken his present appointment to a confidential piece of employment so ill, he would have written to him and

asked him to go up to Haytersbank Farm, and let him know how they all were.

All this time he was transacting the affair, on which he had been sent, with great skill; and, indeed, in several ways, he was quietly laying the foundation for enlarging the business in Monkshaven. Naturally grave and quiet, and slow to speak, he impressed those who saw him with the idea of greater age and experience than he really possessed. Indeed, those who encountered him in London, thought he was absorbed in the business of money-making. Yet before the time came when he could wind-up affairs and return to Monkshaven, he would have given all he possessed for a letter from his uncle, telling him something about Sylvia. For he still hoped to hear from Robson, although he knew that he hoped against reason. But we often convince ourselves by good argument that what we wish for need never have been expected; and then, at the end of our reasoning, find that we might have saved ourselves the trouble, for that our wishes are untouched, and are as strong enemies to our peace of mind as ever. Hepburn's baulked hope was the Mordecai sitting in Haman's gate; all his success in his errand to London, his well-doing in worldly affairs, was tasteless, and gave him no pleasure

because of this blank and void of all intelligence concerning Sylvia.

And yet he came back with a letter from the Fosters in his pocket, curt, yet expressive of deep gratitude for his discreet services in London; and at another time—in fact, if Philip's life had been ordered differently to what it was—it might have given this man a not unworthy pleasure to remember that, without a penny of his own, simply by diligence, honesty, and faithful quick-sightedness as to the interests of his masters, he had risen to hold the promise of being their successor, and to be ranked by them as a trusted friend.

As the Newcastle smack neared the shore on her voyage home, Hepburn looked wistfully out for the faint grey outline of Monkshaven Priory against the sky, and the well-known cliffs; as if the masses of inanimate stone could tell him any news of Sylvia.

In the streets of Shields, just after landing, he encountered a neighbour of the Robsons, and an acquaintance of his own. By this honest man, he was welcomed as a great traveller is welcomed on his return from a long voyage, with many hearty good shakes of the hand, much repetition of kind wishes, and offers to treat him to drink. Yet, from some insurmountable feeling, Philip avoided all

mention of the family who were the principal bond between the honest farmer and himself. He did not know why, but he could not bear the shock of first hearing her name in the open street, or in the rough public-house. And thus he shrank from the intelligence he craved to hear.

Thus he knew no more about the Robsons when he returned to Monkshaven, than he had done on the day when he had last seen them; and, of course, his first task there was to give a long *vivâ voce* account of all his London proceedings to the two brothers Foster, who, considering that they had heard the result of everything by letter, seemed to take an insatiable interest in details.

He could hardly tell why, but even when released from the Fosters' parlour, he was unwilling to go to Haytersbank Farm. It was late, it is true, but on a May evening even country people keep up till eight or nine o'clock. Perhaps it was because Hepburn was still in his travel-stained dress; having gone straight to the shop on his arrival in Monkshaven. Perhaps it was because, if he went this night for the short half-hour intervening before bed-time, he would have no excuse for paying a longer visit on the following evening. At any rate, he proceeded straight to Alice Rose's, as

soon as he had finished his interview with his employers.

Both Hester and Coulson had given him their welcome home in the shop, which they had, however, left an hour or two before him.

Yet they gave him a fresh greeting, almost one in which surprise was blended, when he came to his lodgings. Even Alice seemed gratified by his spending this first evening with them, as if she had thought it might have been otherwise. Weary though he was, he exerted himself to talk and to relate what he had done and seen in London, as far as he could without breaking confidence with his employers. It was something to see the pleasure he gave to his auditors, although there were several mixed feelings in their minds to produce the expression of it which gratified him. Coulson was sorry for his former ungenerous reception of the news that Philip was going to London; Hester and her mother each secretly began to feel as if this evening was like more happy evenings of old, before the Robsons came to Haytersbank Farm; and who knows what faint delicious hopes this resemblance may not have suggested?

While Philip, restless and excited, feeling that he could not sleep, was glad to pass away the waking

hours that must intervene before to-morrow night, at times, he tried to make them talk of what had happened in Monkshaven during his absence, but all had gone on in an eventless manner, as far as he could gather; if they knew of anything affecting the Robsons, they avoided speaking of it to him; and, indeed, how little likely were they ever to have heard their names while he was away?

CHAPTER VI.

LOVED AND LOST.

Philip walked towards the Robsons' farm like a man in a dream, who has everything around him according to his wish, and yet is conscious of a secret mysterious inevitable drawback to his enjoyment. Hepburn did not care to think—would not realize what this drawback, which need not have been mysterious in his case, was.

The May evening was glorious in light and shadow. The crimson sun warmed up the chilly northern air to a semblance of pleasant heat. The spring sights and sounds were all about; the lambs were bleating out their gentle weariness before they sank to rest by the side of their mothers; the linnets were chirping in every bush of golden gorse that grew out of the stone walls; the lark was singing her good-night in the cloudless sky, before she dropped down to her nest in the tender green wheat; all spoke of brooding peace—but Philip's heart was not at peace.

Yet he was going to proclaim his good fortune. His masters had that day publicly announced that Coulson and he were to be their successors, and he had now arrived at that longed-for point in his business, when he had resolved to openly speak of his love to Sylvia, and might openly strive to gain her love. But alas! the fulfilment of that wish of his had lagged sadly behind. He was placed as far as he could, even in his most sanguine moments, have hoped to be as regarded business, but Sylvia was as far from his attainment as ever—nay, farther. Still the great obstacle was removed in Kinraid's impressment. Philip took upon himself to decide that, with such a man as the specksioneer, absence was equivalent to faithless forgetfulness. He thought that he had just grounds for this decision in the account he had heard of Kinraid's behaviour to Annie Coulson; to the other nameless young girl, her successor in his fickle heart; in the ribald talk of the sailors in the Newcastle public-house. It would be well for Sylvia if she could forget as quickly; and, to promote this oblivion, the name of her lover should never be brought up, either in praise or blame. And Philip would be patient and enduring; all the time watching over her, and labouring to win her reluctant love.

There she was! He saw her as he stood at the top of the little hill-path leading down to the Robsons' door. She was out of doors, in the garden, which, at some distance from the house, sloped up the bank on the opposite side of the gully; much too far off to be spoken to—not too far off to be gazed at by eyes that caressed her every movement. How well Philip knew that garden; placed long ago by some tenant of the farm on a southern slope; walled in with rough moorland stones; planted with berry-bushes for use, and southernwood and sweet-briar for sweetness of smell. When the Robsons had first come to Haytersbank, and Sylvia was scarcely more than a pretty child, how well he remembered helping her with the arrangement of this garden; laying out his few spare pence in hen-and-chicken daisies at one time, in flower-seeds at another; again in a rose-tree in a pot. He knew how his unaccustomed hands had laboured with the spade at forming a little primitive bridge over the beck in the hollow before winter streams should make it too deep for fording; how he had cut down branches of the mountain-ash and covered them over, yet decked with their scarlet berries, with sods of green turf, beyond which the brilliancy crept out; but now it was months and years since he had been in that

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garden, which had lost its charm for Sylvia, as she found the bleak sea-winds came up and blighted all endeavours at cultivating more than the most useful things—pot-herbs, marigolds, potatoes, onions, and such-like. Why did she tarry there now, standing quite motionless up by the highest bit of wall, looking over the sea, with her hand shading her eyes? Quite motionless; as if she were a stone statue. He began to wish she would move—would look at him—but any way that she would move, and not stand gazing thus over that great dreary sea.

He went down the path with an impatient step, and entered the house-place. There sat his aunt spinning, and apparently as well as ever. He could hear his uncle talking to Kester in the neighbouring shippen; all was well in the household. Why was Sylvia standing in the garden in that strange quiet way?

"Why, lad! thou'rt a sight for sair een!" said his aunt, as she stood up to welcome him back. "An' when didst ta come, eh?—but thy uncle will be glad to see thee, and to hear thee talk about yon pleughs; he's thought a deal o' thy letters. I'll go call him in."

"Not yet," said Philip, stopping her in her progress towards the door. "He's busy talking

to Kester. I'm in no haste to be gone. I can stay a couple of hours. Sit down, and tell me how you are yoursel'—and how iverything is. And I've a deal to tell you."

"To be sure—to be sure. To think thou's been in Lunnon sin' I saw thee!—well to be sure! There's a vast o' coming and going i' this world. Thou'll mind yon specksioneer lad, him as was cousin to t' Corneys—Charley Kinraid?"

Mind him! As if he could forget him.

"Well! he's dead and gone."

"Dead! Who told you? I don't understand," said Philip, in strange bewilderment. Could Kinraid have tried to escape after all, and been wounded, killed in the attempt? If not, how should they know he was dead? Missing he might be, though how this should be known was strange, as he was supposed to be sailing to the Greenland seas. But dead! What did they mean? At Philip's worst moment of hatred he had hardly dared to wish him dead.

"Dunnot yo' mention it afore our Sylvia; we niver speak on him to her, for she takes it a deal to heart, though I'm thinkin' it were a good thing for her; for he'd got a hold of her—he had on Bessy Corney, too, as her mother telled me;—not

that I iver let on to them as Sylvia frets after him, so keep a calm sough, my lad. It's a girl's fancy—just a kind o' calf-love; let it go by; and it's well for her he's dead, though it's hard to say so on a drowned man."

"Drowned!" said Philip. "How do yo' know?" half hoping that the poor drenched swollen body might have been found, and thus all questions and dilemmas solved. Kinraid might have struggled overboard with ropes or handcuffs on, and so have been drowned.

"Eh, lad! there's no misdoubtin' it. He were thought a deal on by t' captain o' t' *Urania;* and when he niver come back on t' day when she ought for to have sailed, he sent to Kinraid's people at Cullercoats, and they sent to Brunton's i' Newcassel, and they knew he'd been here. T' captain put off sailing for two or three days, that he might ha' that much law; but when he heard as Kinraid were not at Corneys', but had left 'em a'most on to a week, he went off to them Northern seas wi' t' next best specksioneer he could find. For there's no use speaking ill on t' dead; an' though I couldn't abear his coming for iver about t' house, he were a rare good specksioneer, as I've been told."

"But how do you know he was drowned?" said Philip, feeling guiltily disappointed at his aunt's story.

"Why, lad! I'm a'most ashamed to tell thee, I were sore put out mysel'; but Sylvia were so broken-hearted like I couldn't cast it up to her as I should ha' liked: th' silly lass had gone and gi'en him a bit o' ribbon, as many a one knowed, for it had been a vast noticed and admired that evenin' at th' Corneys'—New Year's Eve I think it were—and t' poor vain peacock had tied it on his hat, so that when t' tide——hist! there's Sylvie coming in at t' back door; never let on," and in a forced made-up voice she inquired aloud, for hitherto she had been speaking almost in a whisper,

"And didst ta see King George an' Queen Charlotte?"

Philip could not answer; did not hear. His soul had gone out to meet Sylvia, who entered with quiet slowness quite unlike her former self. Her face was wan and white; her grey eyes seemed larger, and full of dumb tearless sorrow; she came up to Philip, as if his being there touched her with no surprise, and gave him a gentle greeting as if he were a familiar indifferent person whom she had seen but yesterday. Philip, who had recollected the quarrel

they had had, and about Kinraid too, the very last time they had met, had expected some trace of this remembrance to linger in her looks and speech to him. But there was no such sign; her great sorrow had wiped away all anger, almost all memory. His mother looked at her anxiously, and then said in the same manner of forced cheerfulness which she had used before,

"Here's Philip, lass, a' full o' Lunnon; call thy father in, an' we'll hear a' about t' new-fangled ploughs. It'll be rare an' nice a' sitting together again."

Sylvia, silent and docile, went out to the shippen to obey her mother's wish. Bell Robson leant forward towards Philip, misinterpreting the expression on his face, which was guilt as much as sympathy, and checked the possible repentance which might have urged him on at that moment to tell all he knew, by saying, "Lad! it's a' for t' best. He were noane good enough for her; and I misdoubt me he were only playin' wi' her as he'd done by others. Ler her a-be, let her a-be; she'll come round to be thankful."

Robson bustled in with loud welcome; all the louder and more talkative because he, like his wife, assumed a cheerful manner before Sylvia.

Yet he, unlike his wife, had many a secret regret over Kinraid's fate. At first, while merely the fact of his disappearance was known, Daniel Robson had hit on the truth, and had stuck to his opinion that the cursed press-gang were at the bottom of it. He had backed his words by many an oath, and all the more because he had not a single reason to give that applied to the present occasion. No one on the lonely coast had remarked any sign of the presence of the men-of-war, or the tenders that accompanied them, for the purpose of impressment on the king's ships. At Shields, and at the mouth of the Tyne, where they lay in greedy wait, the owners of the *Urania* had caused strict search to be made for their skilled and protected specksioneer, but with no success. All this positive evidence in contradiction to Daniel Robson's opinion only made him cling to it the more; until the day when the hat was found on the shore with Kinraid's name written out large and fair in the inside, and the tell-tale bit of ribbon knotted in the band. Then Daniel, by a sudden revulsion, gave up every hope; it never entered his mind that it could have fallen off by any accident. No! now Kinraid was dead and drowned, and it was a bad job, and the sooner it could be forgotten the better for all parties; and

it was well no one knew how far it had gone with Sylvia, especially now since Bessy Corney was crying her eyes out as if he had been engaged to her. So Daniel said nothing to his wife about the mischief that had gone on in her absence, and never spoke to Sylvia about the affair; only he was more than usually tender to her in his rough way, and thought, morning, noon, and night, on what he could do to give her pleasure, and drive away all recollection of her ill-starred love.

To-night he would have her sit by him while Philip told his stories, or heavily answered questions put to him. Sylvia sat on a stool by her father's knee holding one of his hands in both of hers; and presently she laid down her head upon them, and Philip saw her sad eyes looking into the flickering fire-light with long unwinking stare, showing that her thoughts were far distant. He could hardly go on with his tales of what he had seen, and what done, he was so full of pity for her. Yet, for all his pity, he had now resolved never to soothe her with the knowledge of what he knew, nor to deliver the message sent by her false lover. He felt like a mother withholding something injurious from the foolish wish of her plaining child.

But he went away without breathing a word of

his good fortune in business. The telling of such kind of good fortune seemed out of place this night, when the thought of death and the loss of friends seemed to brood over the household, and cast its shadow there, obscuring for the time all worldly things.

And so the great piece of news came out in the ordinary course of gossip, told by some Monkshaven friend to Robson the next market day. For months Philip had been looking forward to the sensation which the intelligence would produce in the farm household, as a preliminary to laying his good fortune at Sylvia's feet. And they heard of it, and he away, and all chance of his making use of it in the manner he had intended vanished for the present.

Daniel was always curious after other people's affairs, and now was more than ever bent on collecting scraps of news which might possibly interest Sylvia and rouse her out of the state of indifference as to everything into which she had fallen. Perhaps he thought that he had not acted altogether wisely in allowing her to engage herself to Kinraid, for he was a man apt to judge by results; and moreover he had had so much reason to repent of the encouragement which he had given to the lover whose untimely end had so deeply affected his

only child, that he was more unwilling than ever that his wife should know of the length to which the affair had gone during her absence. He even urged secrecy upon Sylvia as a personal favour; unwilling to encounter the silent blame which he openly affected to despise.

"We'll noane fret thy mother by lettin' on how oft he came and went. She'll, maybe, be thinkin' he were for speakin' to thee, my poor lass; an' it would put her out a deal, for she's a woman of a stern mind towards matteremony. And she'll be noane so strong till summer-weather comes, an' I'd be loath to give her aught to werrit hersel' about. So thee an' me 'll keep our own counsel."

"I wish mother had been here, then she'd ha' known all, without my telling her."

"Cheer up, lass; it's better as it is. Thou'll get o'er it sooner for havin' no one to let on to. A myself am noane going to speak on 't again."

No more he did; but there was a strange tenderness in his tones when he spoke to her; a half-pathetic way of seeking after her, if by any chance she was absent for a minute from the places where he expected to find her; a consideration for her, about this time, in his way of bringing back trifling presents, or small pieces of news that he thought

might interest her, which sank deep into her heart.

"And what dun yo' think a' t' folks is talkin' on i' Monkshaven?" asked he, almost before he had taken off his coat, on the day when he had heard of Philip's promotion in the world. "Why, missus, thy nephew, Philip Hepburn, has got his name up i' gold letters four inch long o'er Fosters' door! Him and Coulson has set up shop together, and Fosters is gone out!"

"That's t' secret of his journey t' Lunnon," said Bell, more gratified than she chose to show.

"Four inch long if they're theere at all! I heerd on it at t' Bay Horse first; but I thought yo'd niver be satisfied 'bout I seed it wi' my own eyes. They do say as Gregory Jones, t' plumber, got it done i' York, for that nought else would satisfy old Jeremiah. It 'll be a matter o' some hundreds a year i' Philip's pocket."

"There'll be Fosters i' th' background, as one may say, to take t' biggest share on t' profits," said Bell.

"Ay, ay, that's but as it should be, for I reckon they'll ha' to find t' brass the first, my lass!" said he, turning to Sylvia. "A'm fain to tak' thee in to t' town next market day, just for thee t' see 't.

A'll buy thee a bonny ribbon for thy hair out o' t' cousin's own shop."

Some thought of another ribbon which had once tied up her hair, and afterwards been cut in twain, must have crossed Sylvia's mind, for she answered, as if she shrank from her father's words,—

"I cannot go, I'm noane wantin' a ribbon; I'm much obliged, father, a' t' same."

Her mother read her heart clearly, and suffered with her, but never spoke a word of sympathy. But she went on rather more quickly than she would otherwise have done to question her husband as to all he knew about this great rise of Philip's. Once or twice Sylvia joined in with languid curiosity; but presently she became tired and went to bed. For a few moments after she left, her parents sate silent. Then Daniel, in a tone as if he were justifying his daughter and comforting himself as well as his wife, observed that it was almost on for nine; the evenings were light so long now. Bell said nothing in reply, but gathered up her wool, and began to arrange the things for night.

By-and-by Daniel broke the silence by saying,

"A thowt, at one time as Philip had a fancy for our Sylvie."

For a minute or two, Bell did not speak. Then,

with deeper insight into her daughter's heart than her husband, in spite of his greater knowledge of the events that had happened to affect it, she said,—

"If thou's thinking on a match between 'em, it 'll be a long time afore th' poor sad wench is fit t' think on another man as sweetheart."

"A said nought about sweethearts," replied he, as if his wife had reproached him in some way. "Woman's allays so full o' sweethearts and mattere-mony. A only said as a'd thowt once as Philip had a fancy for our lass, and a think so still; and he'll be worth his two hunder a year afore long. But a niver said nought about sweethearts."

CHAPTER VII.

A REJECTED SUITOR.

THERE were many domestic arrangements to be made in connection with the new commercial ones which affected Hepburn and Coulson.

The Fosters, with something of the busybodiness which is apt to mingle itself with kindly patronage, had planned in their own minds that the Rose household should be removed altogether to the house belonging to the shop; and that Alice, with the assistance of the capable servant, who, at present, managed all John's domestic affairs, should continue as mistress of the house, with Philip and Coulson for her lodgers.

But arrangements without her consent did not suit Alice at any time, and she had very good reasons for declining to accede to this. She was not going to be uprooted at her time of life, she said, nor would she consent to enter upon a future which might be so uncertain. Why, Hepburn and Coulson were

both young men, she said, and they were as likely to marry as not; and then the bride would be sure to wish to live in the good old-fashioned house at the back of the shop.

It was in vain she was told by every one concerned, that, in case of such an event, the first married partner should take a house of his own, leaving her in undisputed possession. She replied, with apparent truth, that both might wish to marry, and surely the wife of one ought to take possession of the house belonging to the business; that she was not going to trust herself to the fancies of young men, who were always, the best of them, going and doing the very thing that was most foolish in the way of marriage; of which state, in fact, she spoke with something of acrimonious contempt and dislike, as if young people always got mismatched, yet had not the sense to let older and wiser people choose for them.

"Thou'll not have been understanding why Alice Rose spoke as she did this morning," said Jeremiah Foster to Philip, on the afternoon succeeding the final discussion of this plan. "She was a-thinking of her youth, I reckon, when she was a well-favoured young woman, and our John was full of the thought of marrying her. As he could not have her, he has lived a bachelor all his days. But if I am not

a vast mistaken, all that he has will go to her and to Hester, for all that Hester is the child of another man. Thee and Coulson should have a try for Hester, Philip. I have told Coulson this day of Hester's chances. I told him first because he is my wife's nephew; but I tell thee now, Philip. It would be a good thing for the shop if one of ye was married."

Philip reddened. Often as the idea of marriage had come into his mind, this was the first time it had been gravely suggested to him by another. But he replied quietly enough.

"I don't think Hester Rose has any thought of matrimony."

"To be sure not; it is for thee, or for William Coulson, to make her think. She, maybe, remembers enough of her mother's life with her father to make her slow to think on such things. But it's in her to think on matrimony; it's in all of us."

"Alice's husband was dead before I knew her," said Philip, rather evading the main subject.

"It was a mercy when he were taken. A mercy to them who were left, I mean. Alice was a bonny young woman, with a smile for everybody, when he wed her—a smile for every one except our John, who never could do enough to try and win one from

her. But no! she would have none of him but set her heart on Jack Rose, a sailor in a whale-ship. And so they were married at last, though all her own folks were against it. And he was a profligate sinner, and went after other women, and drank, and beat her. She turned as stiff and as grey as thou seest her now within a year of Hester's birth. I believe they'd have perished for want and cold many a time if it had not been for John. If she ever guessed where the money came from it must have hurt her pride above a bit, for she was always a proud woman. But mother's love is stronger than pride."

Philip fell to thinking; a generation ago something of the same kind had been going on as that which he was now living through, quick with hopes and fears. A girl beloved by two—nay, those two so identical in occupation as he and Kinraid were—Rose identical even in character with what he knew of the specksioneer; a girl choosing the wrong lover, and suffering and soured all her life in consequence of her youth's mistake; was that to be Sylvia's lot?—or, rather, was she not saved from it by the event of the impressment, and by the course of silence he himself had resolved upon? Then he went on to wonder if the lives of one generation were but a

repetition of the lives of those who had gone before, with no variation but from the internal cause that some had greater capacity for suffering than others. Would those very circumstances which made the interest of his life now, return, in due cycle, when he was dead and Sylvia was forgotten?

Perplexed thoughts of this and a similar kind kept returning into Philip's mind whenever he had leisure to give himself up to consideration of anything but the immediate throng of business. And every time he dwelt on this complication and succession of similar events, he emerged from his reverie more and more satisfied with the course he had taken in withholding from Sylvia all knowledge of her lover's fate.

It was settled at length that Philip was to remove to the house belonging to the shop, Coulson remaining with Alice and her daughter. But in the course of the summer the latter told his partner that he had offered marriage to Hester on the previous day, and been refused. It was an awkward affair altogether, as he lived in their house, and was in daily companionship with Hester, who, however, seemed to preserve her gentle calmness, with only a tinge more of reserve in her manner to Coulson.

"I wish yo' could find out what she has again me, Philip," said Coulson, about a fortnight after he had made the proposal. The poor young man thought that Hester's composure of manner towards him since the event argued that he was not distasteful to her; and as he was now on very happy terms with Philip, he came constantly to him, as if the latter could interpret the meaning of all the little occurrences between him and his beloved. "I'm o' right age, not two months betwixt us; and there's few in Monkshaven as would think on her wi' better prospects than me; and she knows my folks; we're kind o' cousins in fact; and I'd be like a son to her mother; and there's none i' Monkshaven as can speak again' my character. There's nought between yo' and her, is there, Philip?"

"I ha' telled thee many a time that she and me is like brother and sister. She's no more thought on me nor I have for her. So be content wi't, for I'se not tell thee again."

"Don't be vexed, Philip; if thou knew what it was to be in love, thou'd be always fancying things, just as I am."

"I might be," said Philip; "but I dunnot think I should be always talking about my fancies."

"I wunnot talk any more after this once, if thou'll

just find out fra' thysel', as it were, what it is she has again' me. I'd go to chapel for iver with her, if that's what she wants. Just ask her, Philip."

"It's an awkward thing for me to be melling wi'," said Hepburn, reluctantly.

"But thou said thee and she were like brother and sister; and a brother would ask a sister, and niver think twice about it."

"Well, well," replied Philip, "I'll see what I can do; but, lad, I dunnot think she'll have thee. She doesn't fancy thee, and fancy is three parts o' love, if reason is t' other fourth."

But somehow Philip could not begin on the subject with Hester. He did not know why, except that, as he said, "it was so awkward." But he really liked Coulson so much as to be anxious to do what the latter wished, although he was almost convinced that it would be of no use. So he watched his opportunity, and found Alice alone and at leisure one Sunday evening.

She was sitting by the window, reading her Bible, when he went in. She gave him a curt welcome, hearty enough for her, for she was always chary in her expressions of pleasure or satisfaction. But she took off her horn spectacles and placed them in the book to keep her place; and then turning

more fully round on her chair, so as to face him, she said,

"Well, lad! and how does it go on? Though it's not a day for t' ask about worldly things. But I niver see thee now but on Sabbath day, and rarely then. Still we munnot speak o' such things on t' Lord's day. So thee mun just say how t' shop is doing, and then we'll leave such vain talk."

"T' shop is doing main an' well, thank ye, mother. But Coulson could tell yo' o' that any day."

"I'd a deal rayther hear fra' thee, Philip. Coulson doesn't know how t' manage his own business, let alone half the business as it took John and Jeremiah's heads, ay, and tasked 'em too, to manage. I've no patience wi' Coulson."

"Why? he's a decent young fellow as ever there is in Monkshaven."

"He may be. He's noane cut his wisdom-teeth yet. But, for that matter, there's other folks as far fra' sense as he is."

"Ay, and farther. Coulson mayn't be so bright at all times as he might be, but he's a steady-goer, and I'd back him again' any chap o' his age i' Monkshaven."

"I know who I'd sooner back in many a thing,

Philip!" She said it with so much meaning that he could not fail to understand that he himself was meant, and he replied, ingenuously enough,

"If yo' mean me, mother, I'll noane deny that in a thing or two I may be more knowledgeable than Coulson. I've had a deal o' time on my hands i' my youth, and I'd good schooling as long as father lived."

"Lad! it's not schooling, nor knowledge, nor book-learning as carries a man through t' world. It's mother-wit. And it's noane schooling, nor knowledge, nor book-learning as takes a young woman. It's summat as cannot be put into words."

"That's just what I told Coulson!" said Philip, quickly. "He were sore put about because Hester had gi'en him the bucket, and came to me about it."

"And what did thou say?" asked Alice, her deep eyes gleaming at him as if to read his face as well as his words. Philip, thinking he could now do what Coulson had begged of him in the neatest manner, went on,

"I told him I'd help him all as I could——"

"Thou did, did thou? Well, well, there's nought sa queer as folks, that a will say," muttered Alice, between her teeth.

"—but that fancy had three parts to do wi' love,"

continued Philip, "and it would be hard, maybe, to get a reason for her not fancying him. Yet I wish she'd think twice about it; he's so set upon having her, I think he'll do himself a mischief wi' fretting, if it goes on as it is."

"It'll noane go on as it is," said Alice, with gloomy oracularness.

"How not?" asked Philip. Then, receiving no answer, he went on, "He loves her true, and he's within a month or two on her age, and his character will bear handling on a' sides; and his share on t' shop will be worth hundreds a year afore long."

Another pause. Alice was trying to bring down her pride to say something, which she could not with all her efforts.

"Maybe yo'll speak a word for him, mother," said Philip, annoyed at her silence.

"I'll do no such thing. Marriages are best made wi'out melling. How do I know but what she likes some one better?"

"Our Hester's not th' lass to think on a young man unless he's been a-wooing on her. And yo' know, mother, as well as I do—and Coulson does too—she's niver given any one a chance to woo her; living half her time here, and t'other half in t' shop, and niver speaking to no one by t' way."

"I wish thou wouldn't come here troubling me on a Sabbath day wi' thy vanity and thy worldly talk. I'd liefer by far be i' that world wheere there's neither marrying nor giving in marriage, for it's all a moithering mess here." She turned to the closed Bible lying on the dresser, and opened it with a bang. While she was adjusting her spectacles on her nose, with hands trembling with passion, she heard Philip say,—

"I ask yo'r pardon, I'm sure. I couldn't well come any other day."

"It's a' t' same—I care not. But thou might as well tell truth. I'll be bound thou's been at Haytersbank Farm some day this week?"

Philip reddened; in fact, he had forgotten how he had got to consider his frequent visits to the farm as a regular piece of occupation. He kept silence.

Alice looked at him with a sharp intelligence that read his silence through.

"I thought so. Next time thou thinks to thyself 'I'm more knowledgeable than Coulson,' just remember Alice Rose's words, and they are these:—If Coulson's too thick sighted to see through a board, thou'rt too blind to see through a window. As for comin' and speakin' up for Coulson, why, he'll be married to some one else afore t' year's out,

for all he thinks he's so set upon Hester now. Go thy ways, and leave me to my Scripture, and come no more on Sabbath days wi' thy vain babbling."

So Philip returned from his mission rather crest-fallen, but quite as far as ever from "seeing through a glass window."

Before the year was out, Alice's prophecy was fulfilled. Coulson, who found the position of a rejected lover in the same house with the girl who had refused him, too uncomfortable to be endured, as soon as he was convinced that his object was decidedly out of his reach, turned his attention to some one else. He did not love his new sweetheart as he had done Hester: there was more of reason and less of fancy in his attachment. But it ended successfully; and before the first snow fell, Philip was best man at his partner's wedding.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEEPENING SHADOWS.

But before Coulson was married, many small events happened—small events to all but Philip. To him they were as the sun and moon. The days when he went up to Haytersbank and Sylvia spoke to him, the days when he went up and she had apparently no heart to speak to any one, but left the room as soon as he came, or never entered it at all, although she must have known that he was there—these were his alternations from happiness to sorrow.

From her parents he always had a welcome. Oppressed by their daughter's depression of spirits, they hailed the coming of any visitor as a change for her as well as for themselves. The former intimacy with the Corneys was in abeyance for all parties, owing to Bessy Corney's out-spoken grief for the loss of her cousin, as if she had had reason to look upon him as her lover, whereas

Sylvia's parents felt this as a slur upon their daughter's cause of grief. But although at this time the members of the two families ceased to seek after each other's society, nothing was said. The thread of friendship might be joined afresh at any time, only just now it was broken; and Philip was glad of it. Before going to Hayters-bank he sought each time for some little present with which to make his coming welcome. And now he wished even more than ever that Sylvia had cared for learning; if she had he could have taken her many a pretty ballad, or story-book, such as were then in vogue. He did try her with the translation of the *Sorrows of Werther,* so popular at the time that it had a place in all pedlars' baskets, with Law's *Serious Call,* the *Pilgrim's Progress,* Klopstock's *Messiah,* and *Paradise Lost.* But she could not read it for herself; and after turning the leaves languidly over, and smiling a little at the picture of Charlotte cutting bread and butter in a left-handed manner, she put it aside on the shelf by the *Complete Farrier;* and there Philip saw it, upside down and untouched, the next time he came to the farm.

Many a time during that summer did he turn to the few verses in Genesis in which Jacob's

twice seven years' service for Rachel is related, and try and take fresh heart from the reward which came to the patriarch's constancy at last. After trying books, nosegays, small presents of pretty articles of dress, such as suited the notions of those days, and finding them all received with the same languid gratitude, he set himself to endeavour to please her in some other way. It was time that he should change his tactics; for the girl was becoming weary of the necessity for thanking him, every time he came, for some little favour or other. She wished he would let her alone, and not watch her continually with such sad eyes. Her father and mother hailed her first signs of impatient petulance towards him, as a return to the old state of things before Kinraid had come to disturb the tenour of their lives; for even Daniel had turned against the specksioneer, irritated by the Corneys' loud moans over the loss of the man to whom their daughter said that she was attached. If Daniel wished for him to be alive again, it was mainly that the Corneys might be convinced that his last visit to the neighbourhood of Monkshaven was for the sake of the pale and silent Sylvia, and not for that of Bessy, who complained of Kinraid's untimely death rather as if by it she had

been cheated of a husband than for any overwhelming personal love towards the deceased.

"If he were after her he were a big black scoundrel, that's what he were; and a wish he were alive again to be hung. But a dunnot believe it; them Corney lasses were allays a-talkin' an' a-thinkin' on sweethearts, and niver a man crossed t' threshold but they tried him on as a husband. An' their mother were no better: Kinraid has spoken civil to Bessy as became a lad to a lass, and she makes an ado over him as if they'd been to church together not a week sin'."

"I dunnot uphold t' Corneys; but Molly Corney —as is Molly Brunton now—used to speak on this dead man to our Sylvie as if he were her sweetheart in old days. Now there's no smoke without fire, and I'm thinking it's likely enough he were one of them fellows as is always after some lass or another, and, as often as not, two or three at a time. Now look at Philip, what a different one he is! He's niver thought on a woman but our Sylvie, I'll be bound. I wish he wern't so old-fashioned and faint-hearted."

"Ay! and t' shop's doin' a vast o' business, I've heard say. He's a deal better company, too, nor

he used to be. He'd a way o' preaching wi' him as a couldn't abide; but now he tak's his glass, an' holds his tongue, leavin' room for wiser men to say their say."

Such was a conjugal colloquy about this time. Philip was gaining ground with Daniel, and that was something towards winning Sylvia's heart; for she was unaware of her father's change of feeling towards Kinraid, and took all his tenderness towards herself as if they were marks of his regard for her lost lover and his sympathy in her loss, instead of which he was rather feeling as if it might be a good thing after all that the fickle-hearted sailor was dead and drowned. In fact, Daniel was very like a child in all the parts of his character. He was strongly affected by whatever was present, and apt to forget the absent. He acted on impulse, and too often had reason to be sorry for it; but he hated his sorrow too much to let it teach him wisdom for the future. With all his many faults, however, he had something in him which made him be dearly loved, both by the daughter whom he indulged, and the wife who was in fact superior to him, but whom he imagined that he ruled with a wise and absolute sway.

Love to Sylvia gave Philip tact. He seemed

to find out that to please the women of the household he must pay all possible attention to the man; and though he cared little in comparison for Daniel, yet this autumn he was continually thinking of how he could please him. When he had said or done anything to gratify or amuse her father, Sylvia smiled and was kind. Whatever he did was right with his aunt; but even she was unusually glad when her husband was pleased. Still his progress was slow towards his object; and often he sighed himself to sleep with the words, "seven years, and maybe seven years more." Then in his dreams he saw Kinraid again, sometimes struggling, sometimes sailing towards land, the only one on board a swift advancing ship, alone on deck, stern and avenging; till Philip awoke in remorseful terror.

Such and similar dreams returned with the greater frequency when, in the November of that year, the coast between Hartlepool and Monkshaven was overshadowed by the presence of guard-ships, driven south from their station at North Shields by the resolution which the sailors of that port had entered into to resist the press-gang, and the energy with which they had begun to carry out their determination. For on a certain Tuesday evening yet remem-

bered by old inhabitants of North Shields, the sailors in the merchant service met together and overpowered the press-gang, dismissing them from the town with the highest contempt, and with their jackets reversed. A numerous mob went with them to Chirton Bar; gave them three cheers at parting, but vowed to tear them limb from limb should they seek to re-enter North Shields. But a few days afterwards some fresh cause of irritation arose, and five hundred sailors, armed with such swords and pistols as they could collect, paraded through the town in the most riotous manner, and at last attempted to seize the tender *Eleanor*, on some pretext of the ill-treatment of the impressed men aboard. This endeavour failed, however, owing to the energetic conduct of the officers in command. Next day this body of sailors set off for Newcastle; but learning, before they reached the town, that there was a strong military and civil force prepared to receive them there, they dispersed for the time; but not before the good citizens had received a great fright, the drums of the North Yorkshire militia beating to arms, and the terrified people rushing out into the streets to learn the reason of the alarm, and some of them seeing the militia, under the command of the Earl of Fauconberg, marching from the guard-

house adjoining New Gate to the house of rendezvous for impressed seamen in the Broad Chase.

But a few weeks after, the impressment service took their revenge for the insults they had been subjected to in North Shields. In the dead of night a cordon was formed round that town by a regiment stationed at Tynemouth barracks; the press-gangs belonging to armed vessels lying off Shields harbour were let loose; no one within the circle could escape, and upwards of two hundred and fifty men, sailors, mechanics, labourers of every description, were forced on board the armed ships. With that prize they set sail, and wisely left the place, where deep passionate vengeance was sworn against them. Not all the dread of an invasion by the French could reconcile the people of these coasts to the necessity of impressment. Fear and confusion prevailed after this to within many miles of the sea-shore. A Yorkshire gentleman of rank said that his labourers dispersed like a covey of birds, because a press-gang was reported to have established itself so far inland as Tadcaster; and they only returned to work on the assurance from the steward of his master's protection, but even then begged leave to sleep on straw in the stables or outhouses belonging to their landlord, not daring to sleep at their own homes. No fish was

caught, for the fishermen dared not venture out to sea; the markets were deserted, as the press-gangs might come down on any gathering of men; prices were raised, and many were impoverished; many others ruined. For in the great struggle in which England was then involved, the navy was esteemed her safeguard; and men must be had at any price of money, or suffering, or of injustice. Landsmen were kidnapped and taken to London; there, in too many instances, to be discharged without redress and penniless, because they were discovered to be useless for the purpose for which they had been taken.

Autumn brought back the whaling ships. But the period of their return was full of gloomy anxiety, instead of its being the annual time of rejoicing and feasting; of gladdened households, where brave steady husbands or sons returned; of unlimited and reckless expenditure, and boisterous joviality among those who thought that they had earned unbounded licence on shore by their six months of compelled abstinence. In other years this had been the time for new and handsome winter clothing; for cheerful if humble hospitality; for the shopkeepers to display their gayest and best; for the public-houses to be crowded; for the streets to be full of blue jackets, rolling along with merry words and open hearts. In

other years the boiling-houses had been full of active workers, the staithes crowded with barrels, the ship-carpenters' yards thronged with seamen and captains; now a few men, tempted by high wages, went stealthily by back lanes to their work, clustering together, with sinister looks, glancing round corners, and fearful of every approaching footstep, as if they were going on some unlawful business, instead of true honest work. Most of them kept their whaling-knives about them ready for bloody defence if they were attacked. The shops were almost deserted; there was no unnecessary expenditure by the men; they dared not venture out to buy lavish presents for the wife or sweetheart or little children. The public-houses kept scouts on the look-out; while fierce men drank and swore deep oaths of vengeance in the bar—men who did not maunder in their cups, nor grow foolishly merry, but in whom liquor called forth all the desperate, bad passions of human nature.

Indeed, all along the coast of Yorkshire, it seemed as if a blight hung over the land and the people. Men dodged about their daily business with hatred and suspicion in their eyes, and many a curse went over the sea to the three fatal ships lying motionless at anchor three miles off Monkshaven. When first

Philip had heard in his shop that these three men-of-war might be seen lying fell and still on the grey horizon, his heart sank, and he scarcely dared to ask their names. For if one should be the *Alcestis;* if Kinraid should send word to Sylvia; if he should say he was living, and loving, and faithful; if it should come to pass that the fact of the undelivered message sent by her lover through Philip should reach Sylvia's ears: what would be the position of the latter, not merely in her love—that, of course, would be hopeless—but in her esteem? All sophistry vanished, the fear of detection awakened Philip to a sense of guilt; and, besides, he found out, that in spite of all idle talk and careless slander, he could not help believing that Kinraid was in terrible earnest when he uttered those passionate words, and entreated that they might be borne to Sylvia. Some instinct told Philip that if the specksioneer had only flirted with too many, yet that for Sylvia Robson his love was true and vehement. Then Philip tried to convince himself that from all that was said of his previous character, Kinraid was not capable of an enduring constant attachment; and with such poor opiate to his conscience as he could obtain from this notion Philip was obliged to remain content, until, a day or two after the first intelligence of the presence of those

three ships, he learned, with some trouble and pains, that their names were the *Megæra*, the *Bellerophon*, and the *Hanover*.

Then he began to perceive how unlikely it was that the *Alcestis* should have been lingering on this shore all these many months. She was, doubtless, gone far away by this time; she had, probably, joined the fleet on the war station. Who could tell what had become of her and her crew? she might have been in battle before now, and if so——

So his previous fancies shrank to nothing, rebuked for their improbability, and with them vanished his self-reproach. Yet there were times when the popular attention seemed totally absorbed by the dread of the press-gang; when no other subject was talked about —hardly, in fact, thought about. At such flows of panic, Philip had his own private fears lest a flash of light should come upon Sylvia, and she should suddenly see that Kinraid's absence might be accounted for in another way besides death. But when he reasoned, this seemed unlikely. No man-of-war had been seen off the coast, or, if seen, had never been spoken about, at the time of Kinraid's disappearance. If he had vanished this winter time, every one would have been convinced that the press-

gang had seized upon him. Philip had never heard any one breathe the dreaded name of the *Alcestis*. Besides, he went on to think, at the farm they are out of hearing of this one great weary subject of talk. But it was not so, as he became convinced one evening. His aunt caught him a little aside while Sylvia was in the dairy, and her husband talking in the shippen with Kester.

"For good's sake, Philip, dunnot thee bring us talk about t' press-gang. It's a thing as has got hold on my measter, till thou'd think him possessed. He's speaking perpetual on it i' such a way, that thou'd think he were itching to kill 'em a' afore he tasted bread again. He really trembles wi' rage and passion; an' a' night it's just as bad. He starts up i' his sleep, swearing and cursing at 'em, till I'm sometimes afeard he'll mak' an end o' me by mistake. And what mun he do last night but open out on Charley Kinraid, and tell Sylvie he thought m'appen t' gang had got hold on him. It might make her cry a' her saut tears o'er again."

Philip spoke, by no wish of his own, but as if compelled to speak.

"An' who knows but what it's true?"

The instant these words had come out of his lips he could have bitten his tongue off. And yet

afterwards it was a sort of balm to his conscience that he had so spoken.

"What nonsense, Philip!" said his aunt; "why, these fearsome ships were far out o' sight when he went away, good go wi' him, and Sylvie just getting o'er her trouble so nicely, and even my master went on for to say if they'd getten hold on him, he were not a chap to stay wi' 'em; he'd gi'en proofs on his hatred to 'em, time on. He either ha' made off—an' then sure enough we should ha' heerd on him somehow—them Corneys is full on him still and they've a deal to do wi' his folk beyond Newcassel—or as my master says he were just t' chap to hang or drown hissel, sooner nor do aught again his will."

"What did Sylvie say?" asked Philip, in a hoarse low voice.

"Say? why, a' she could say was to burst out crying, and after a bit, she just repeated her feyther's words, and said anyhow he was dead, for he'd niver live to go to sea wi' a press-gang. She knowed him too well for that. Thou sees she thinks a deal on him for a spirited chap, as can do what he will. I belie' me she first began to think on him time o' t' fight aboard th' *Good Fortune,* when Darley were killed, and he would seem tame-

like to her if he couldn't conquer press-gangs, and men-o'-war. She's sooner think on him drowned, as she's ne'er to see him again."

"It's best so," said Philip, and then to calm his unusually excited aunt, he promised to avoid the subject of the press-gang as much as possible.

But it was a promise very difficult of performance, for Daniel Robson was, as his wife said, like one possessed. He could hardly think of anything else, though he himself was occasionally weary of the same constantly recurring idea, and would fain have banished it from his mind. He was too old a man to be likely to be taken by them; he had no son to become their victim; but the terror of them, which he had braved and defied in his youth, seemed to come back and take possession of him in his age; and with the terror came impatient hatred. Since his wife's illness the previous winter he had been a more sober man until now. He was never exactly drunk, for he had a strong well-seasoned head; but the craving to hear the last news of the actions of the press-gang drew him into Monkshaven nearly every day at this dead agricultural season of the year; and a public-house is generally the focus from which gossip radiates; and probably the amount of drink thus consumed weakened Robson's

power over his mind, and caused the concentration of thought on one subject. This may be a physiological explanation of what afterwards was spoken of as a supernatural kind of possession, leading him to his doom.

CHAPTER IX.

RETALIATION.

THE public-house that had been chosen by the leaders of the press-gang in Monkshaven at this time, for their rendezvous (or "Randyvowse" as it was generally pronounced), was an inn of poor repute, with a yard at the back which opened on to the staithe or quay nearest to the open sea. A strong high stone wall bounded this grass-grown mouldy yard on two sides; the house, and some unused out-buildings, formed the other two. The choice of the place was good enough, both as to situation, which was sufficiently isolated, and yet near to the widening river, and as to the character of the landlord; John Hobbs was a failing man, one who seemed as if doomed to be unfortunate in all his undertakings, and the consequence of all this was that he was envious of the more prosperous, and willing to do anything that might bring him in a little present success in life. His household consisted of his wife, her niece, who acted as servant,

and an out-of-doors man, a brother of Ned Simpson, the well-doing butcher, who at one time had had a fancy for Sylvia. But the one brother was prosperous, the other had gone on sinking in life, like him who was now his master. Neither Hobbs nor his man Simpson were absolutely bad men; if things had gone well with them they might each have been as scrupulous and conscientious as their neighbours, and even now, supposing the gain in money to be equal, they would sooner have done good than evil; but a very small sum was enough to turn the balance. And in a greater degree than in most cases was the famous maxim of Rochefoucault true with them; for in the misfortunes of their friends they seemed to see some justification of their own. It was blind fate dealing out events, not that the events themselves were the inevitable consequences of folly or misconduct. To such men as these the large sum offered by the lieutenant of the press-gang for the accommodation of the Mariners' Arms was simply and immediately irresistible. The best room in the dilapidated house was put at the service of the commanding officer of the impress service, and all other arrangements made at his desire, irrespective of all the former unprofitable sources of custom and of business. If the relatives

both of Hobbs and of Simpson had not been so well known and so prosperous in the town, they themselves would have received more marks of popular ill opinion than they did during the winter the events of which are now being recorded. As it was, people spoke to them when they appeared at kirk or at market, but held no conversation with them; no, not although they each appeared better dressed than they had either of them done for years past, and although their whole manner showed a change, inasmuch as they had been formerly snarling and misanthropic, and were now civil almost to deprecation.

Every one who was capable of understanding the state of feeling in Monkshaven at this time must have been aware that at any moment an explosion might take place; and probably there were those who had judgment enough to be surprised that it did not take place sooner than it did. For until February there were only occasional cries and growls of rage, as the press-gang made their captures first here, then there; often, apparently, tranquil for days, then heard of at some distance along the coast, then carrying off a seaman from the very heart of the town. They seemed afraid of provoking any general hostility, such as that which had driven them from

Shields, and would have conciliated the inhabitants if they could; the officers on the service and on board the three men-of-war coming often into the town, spending largely, talking to all with cheery friendliness, and making themselves very popular in such society as they could obtain access to at the houses of the neighbouring magistrates or at the rectory. But this, however agreeable, did not forward the object the impress service had in view; and, accordingly, a more decided step was taken at a time when, although there was no apparent evidence as to the fact, the town was full of the Greenland mariners coming quietly in to renew their yearly engagements, which, when done, would legally entitle them to protection from impressment. One night—it was on a Saturday, February 23rd, when there was a bitter black frost, with a north-east wind sweeping through the streets, and men and women were close shut in their houses—all were startled in their household content and warmth by the sound of the fire-bell busily swinging, and pealing out for help. The fire-bell was kept in the market-house where High Street and Bridge Street met: every one knew what it meant. Some dwelling, or maybe a boiling-house was on fire, and neighbourly assistance was summoned with all speed, in a town where no

water was laid on, nor fire-engines kept in readiness. Men snatched up their hats, and rushed out, wives following, some with the readiest wraps they could lay hands on, with which to clothe the over-hasty husbands, others from that mixture of dread and curiosity which draws people to the scene of any disaster. Those of the market people who were making the best of their way homewards, having waited in the town till the early darkness concealed their path, turned back at the sound of the ever-clanging fire-bell, ringing out faster and faster as if the danger became every instant more pressing.

As men ran against or alongside of each other, their breathless question was ever, "Where is it?" and no one could tell; so they pressed onwards into the market-place, sure of obtaining the information desired there, where the fire-bell kept calling out with its furious metal tongue.

The dull oil-lamps in the adjoining streets only made darkness visible in the thronged market-place, where the buzz of many men's unanswered questions was rising louder and louder. A strange feeling of dread crept over those nearest to the closed market-house. Above them in the air the bell was still clanging; but before them was a door fast shut and locked; no one to speak and

tell them why they were summoned — where they ought to be. They were at the heart of the mystery, and it was a silent blank! Their unformed dread took shape at the cry from the outside of the crowd, from where men were still coming down the eastern side of Bridge Street. "The gang! the gang!" shrieked out some one. "The gang are upon us! Help! help!" Then the fire-bell had been a decoy; a sort of seething the kid in its mother's milk, leading men into a snare through their kindliest feelings. Some dull sense of this added to utter dismay, and made them struggle and strain to get to all the outlets save that in which a fight was now going on; the swish of heavy whips, the thud of bludgeons, the groans, the growls of wounded or infuriated men, coming with terrible distinctness through the darkness to the quickened ear of fear.

A breathless group rushed up the blackness of a narrow entry to stand still awhile, and recover strength for fresh running. For a time nothing but heavy pants and gasps were heard amongst them. No one knew his neighbour, and their good feeling, so lately abused and preyed upon, made them full of suspicion. The first who spoke was recognized by his voice.

"Is it thee, Daniel Robson?" asked his neighbour, in a low tone.

"Ay! Who else should it be?"

"A dunno."

"If a am to be any one else, I'd like to be a chap of nobbut eight stun. A'm welly done for!"

"It were as bloody a shame as iver I heered on. Who's to go t' t' next fire, a'd like to know!"

"A tell yo' what, lads," said Daniel, recovering his breath, but speaking in gasps. "We were a pack o' cowards to let 'em carry off yon chaps as easy as they did, a'm reckoning!"

"A think so, indeed," said another voice.

Daniel went on—

"We was two hunder, if we was a man; an' t' gang has niver numbered above twelve."

"But they was armed. A seen t' glitter on their cutlasses," spoke out a fresh voice.

"What then!" replied he who had latest come, and who stood at the mouth of the entry. "A had my whalin' knife wi' me i' my pea-jacket as my missus threw at me, and a'd ha' ripped 'em up as soon as winkin', if a could ha' thought what was best to do wi' that d—d bell makin' such a din reet above us. A man can but die onest, and we was ready to go int' t' fire for t' save folks'

lives, and yet we'd none on us t' wit to see as we might ha' saved yon poor chaps as screeched out for help."

"They'll ha' getten 'em to t' Randyvowse by now," said some one.

"They cannot tak' 'em aboard till morning; t' tide won't serve," said the last speaker but one.

Daniel Robson spoke out the thought that was surging up into the brain of every one there.

"There's a chance for us a'. How many be we?" By dint of touching each other the numbers were counted. Seven. "Seven. But if us seven turns out and rouses t' town, there'll be many a score ready to gang to t' Mariners' Arms, and it'll be easy work reskyin' them chaps as is pressed. Us seven, each man jack on us, go and seek up his friends, and get him as well as he can to t' church steps; then, mebbe, there'll be some theere as'll not be so soft as we was, lettin' them poor chaps be carried off from under our noses, just becase our ears was busy listenin' to yon confounded bell, whose clip-clappin' tongue a'll tear out afore this week is out."

Before Daniel had finished speaking, those nearest to the entrance muttered their assent to his project, and had stolen off, keeping to the darkest side of the streets and lanes, which they threaded in different directions; most of them going straight as sleuth-

hounds to the haunts of the wildest and most desperate portion of the seafaring population of Monkshaven. For, in the breasts of many, revenge for the misery and alarm of the past winter took a deeper and more ferocious form than Daniel had thought of when he made his proposal of a rescue. To him it was an adventure like many he had been engaged in in his younger days; indeed, the liquor he had drunk had given him a fictitious youth for the time; and it was more in the light of a rough frolic of which he was to be the leader, that he limped along (always lame from old attacks of rheumatism), chuckling to himself at the apparent stillness of the town, which gave no warning to the press-gang at the Rendezvous of anything in the wind. Daniel, too, had his friends to summon; old hands like himself, but "deep uns," also, like himself, as he imagined.

It was nine o'clock when all who were summoned met at the church steps; and by nine o'clock, Monkshaven, in those days, was more quiet and asleep than many a town at present is at midnight. The church and churchyard above them were flooded with silver light, for the moon was high in the heavens: the irregular steps were here and there in pure white clearness, here and there in blackest shadow.

But more than half way up to the top, men clustered like bees; all pressing so as to be near enough to question those who stood nearest to the planning of the attack. Here and there, a woman, with wild gestures and shrill voice, that no entreaty would hush down to the whispered pitch of the men, pushed her way through the crowd—this one imploring immediate action, that adjuring those around her to smite and spare not those who had carried off her "man,"—the father, the bread-winner. Low down in the darkened silent town were many whose hearts went with the angry and excited crowd, and who would bless them and caress them for that night's deeds. Daniel soon found himself a laggard in planning, compared to some of those around him. But when, with the rushing sound of many steps and but few words, they had arrived at the blank, dark, shut-up Mariners' Arms, they paused in surprise at the uninhabited look of the whole house: it was Daniel once more who took the lead.

"Speak 'em fair," said he; "try good words first. Hobbs 'll mebbe let 'em out quiet, if we can catch a word wi' him. A say, Hobbs," said he, raising his voice, "is a' shut up for t' neet; for a'd be glad of a glass. A'm Dannel Robson, thou knows."

Not one word in reply, any more than from the

tomb; but his speech had been heard nevertheless. The crowd behind him began to jeer and to threaten; there was no longer any keeping down their voices, their rage, their terrible oaths. If doors and windows had not of late been strengthened with bars of iron in anticipation of some such occasion, they would have been broken in with the onset of the fierce and now yelling crowd who rushed against them with the force of a battering-ram, to recoil in baffled rage from the vain assault. No sign, no sound from within, in that breathless pause.

"Come away round here! a've found a way to t' back o' behint, where belike it's not so well fenced," said Daniel, who had made way for younger and more powerful men to conduct the assault, and had employed his time meanwhile in examining the back premises. The men rushed after him, almost knocking him down, as he made his way into the lane into which the doors of the outbuildings belonging to the inn opened. Daniel had already broken the fastening of that which opened into a damp, mouldy-smelling shippen, in one corner of which a poor lean cow shifted herself on her legs, in an uneasy, restless manner, as her sleeping-place was invaded by as many men as could cram themselves into the dark hold. Daniel, at the end farthest from the door, was

almost smothered before he could break down the rotten wooden shutter, that, when opened, displayed the weedy yard of the old inn, the full clear light defining the outline of each blade of grass by the delicate black shadow behind.

This hole, used to give air and light to what had once been a stable, in the days when horse travellers were in the habit of coming to the "Mariners' Arms," was large enough to admit the passage of a man; and Daniel, in virtue of its discovery, was the first to get through. But he was larger and heavier than he had been; his lameness made him less agile, and the impatient crowd behind him gave him a helping push that sent him down on the round stones with which the yard was paved, and for the time disabled him so much that he could only just crawl out of the way of leaping feet and heavy nailed boots, which came through the opening till the yard was filled with men, who now set up a fierce, derisive shout, which, to their delight, was answered from within. No more silence, no more dead opposition: a living struggle, a glowing, raging fight; and Daniel thought he should be obliged to sit there still, leaning against the wall, inactive, while the strife and the action were going on in which he had once been foremost.

He saw the stones torn up; he saw them used with good effect on the unguarded back-door; he cried out in useless warning as he saw the upper windows open, and aim taken among the crowd; but just then the door gave way, and there was an involuntary forward motion in the throng, so that no one was so disabled by the shots as to prevent their forcing their way in with the rest. And now the sounds came veiled by the walls as of some raging ravening beast growling over his prey; the noise came and went—once utterly ceased; and Daniel raised himself with difficulty to ascertain the cause, when again the roar came clear and fresh, and men poured into the yard again, shouting and rejoicing over the rescued victims of the press-gang. Daniel hobbled up, and shouted, and rejoiced, and shook hands with the rest, hardly caring to understand that the lieutenant and his gang had quitted the house by a front window, and that all had poured out in search of them; the greater part, however, returning to liberate the prisoners, and then glut their vengeance on the house and its contents.

From all the windows, upper and lower, furniture was now being thrown into the yard. The smash of glass, the heavier crash of wood, the cries, the laughter, the oaths, all excited Daniel to the utmost;

and, forgetting his bruises, he pressed forwards to lend a helping hand. The wild, rough success of his scheme almost turned his head. He hurraed at every flagrant piece of destruction; he shook hands with every one around him, and, at last, when the destroyers inside paused to take breath, he cried out,—

"If a was as young as onest a was, a'd have t' Randyvowse down, and mak' a bonfire on it. We'd ring t' fire-bell then t' some purpose."

No sooner said than done. Their excitement was ready to take the slightest hint of mischief; old chairs, broken tables, odd drawers, smashed chests, were rapidly and skilfully heaped into a pyramid, and one, who at the first broaching of the idea had gone for live coals the speedier to light up the fire, came now through the crowd with a large shovelful of red-hot cinders. The rioters stopped to take breath and look on like children at the uncertain flickering blaze, which sprang high one moment, and dropped down the next only to creep along the base of the heap of wreck, and make secure of its future work. Then the lurid blaze darted up wild, high, and irrepressible; and the men around gave a cry of fierce exultation, and in rough mirth began to try and push each other

in. In one of the pauses of the rushing, roaring noise of the flames, the moaning low and groan of the poor alarmed cow fastened up in the shippen caught Daniel's ear, and he understood her groans as well as if they had been words. He limped out of the yard through the now deserted house, where men were busy at the mad work of destruction, and found his way back to the lane into which the shippen opened. The cow was dancing about at the roar, and dazzle, and heat of the fire; but Daniel knew how to soothe her, and in a few minutes he had a rope round her neck, and led her gently out from the scene of her alarm. He was still in the lane when Simpson, the man-of-all-work at the Mariners' Arms, crept out of some hiding-place in the deserted out-building, and stood suddenly face to face with Robson.

The man was white with fear and rage.

"Here, tak' thy beast, and lead her wheere she'll noane hear yon cries and shouts. She's fairly moithered wi' heat an' noise."

"They're brennin' ivery rag I have i' t' world," gasped out Simpson: "I niver had much, and now I'm a beggar."

"Well! thou shouldn't ha' turned again' thine own townfolks, and harboured t' gang. Sarves thee

reet. A'd noane be here leadin' beasts if a were as young as a were; a'd be in t' thick on it."

"It was thee set 'em on—a heerd thee—a see'd thee a helping on 'em t' break in; they'd niver ha' thought on attackin' t' house, and settin' fire to yon things if thou hadn't spoken on it." Simpson was now fairly crying. But Daniel did not realize what the loss of all the small property he had in the world was to the poor fellow (rapscallion though he was, broken down, unprosperous ne'er-do-weel!) in his pride at the good work he believed he had set on foot.

"Ay," said he; "it's a great thing for folk to have a chap for t' lead 'em wi' a head on his shouthers. A misdoubt me if there were a felly theere as would ha' thought o' routling out yon wasps' nest; it tak's a deal o' mother-wit to be up to things. But t' gang 'll niver harbour theere again, one while. A only wish we'd cotched 'em. An' a should like t' ha' gi'en Hobbs a bit o' my mind."

"He's had his sauce," said Simpson, dolefully. "Him and me is ruined."

"Tut, tut, thou's got thy brother, he's rich enough. And Hobbs 'll do a deal better; he's had his lesson now, and he'll stick to his own

side time to come. Here, tak' thy beast an' look after her, for my bones is achin'. An' mak' thysel' scarce, for some o' them fellys has getten their blood up, an' wunnot be for treating thee o'er well if they fall in wi' thee."

"Hobbs ought to be served out; it were him as made t' bargain wi' lieutenant; and he's off safe wi' his wife and his money bag, and a'm left a beggar this neet i' Monkshaven street. My brother and me has had words, and he'll do nought for me but curse me. A had three crown-pieces, and a good pair o' breeches, and a shirt, and a dare say better nor two pair o' stockings. A wish t' gang, and thee, and Hobbs, and them mad folk up yonder were a' down i' hell. A do."

"Coom, lad," said Daniel, noways offended at his companion's wish on his behalf. "A'm noane flush mysel, but here's half-a-crown, and tuppence, it's a' a've getten wi' me; but it'll keep thee and t' beast i' food and shelter to-neet, and get thee a glass o' comfort, too. A had thought o' takin' one mysel', but a shannot ha' a penny left, so a'll just toddle whoam to my missus."

Daniel was not in the habit of feeling any emotion at actions not directly affecting himself; or else he might have despised the poor wretch

who immediately clutched at the money, and overwhelmed that man with slobbery thanks whom he had not a minute before been cursing. But all Simpson's stronger passions had been long ago used up; now he only faintly liked and disliked, where once he loved and hated; his only vehement feeling was for himself; that cared for, other men might wither or flourish as best suited them.

Many of the doors which had been close shut when the crowd went down the High Street, were partially open as Daniel slowly returned; and light streamed from them on the otherwise dark road. The news of the successful attempt at rescue had reached those who had sate in mourning and in desolation an hour or two ago, and several of these pressed forwards as from their watching corner they recognized Daniel's approach; they pressed forward into the street to shake him by the hand, to thank him (for his name had been bruited abroad as one of those who had planned the affair), and at several places he was urged to have a dram—urgency that he was loath for many reasons to refuse, but his increasing uneasiness and pain made him for once abstinent, and only anxious to get home and rest. But he could not help being both touched and flattered at the way

in which those who formed his "world" looked upon him as a hero; and was not insensible to the words of blessing which a wife, whose husband had been impressed and rescued this night, poured down upon him as he passed.

"Theere, theere,—dunnot crack thy throat wi' blessin'. Thy man would ha' done as much for me, though mebbe he mightn't ha' shown so much gumption and capability; but them's gifts, and not to be proud on."

When Daniel reached the top of the hill on the road home, he turned to look round; but he was lame and bruised, he had gone along slowly, the fire had pretty nearly died out, only a red hue in the air about the houses at the end of the long High Street, and a hot lurid mist against the hill-side beyond where the Mariners' Arms had stood, were still left as signs and token of the deed of violence.

Daniel looked and chuckled. "That comes o' ringin' t' fire-bell," said he to himself; "it were shame for it to be tellin' a lie, poor oud story-teller."

CHAPTER X.

BRIEF REJOICING.

DANIEL'S unusually late absence from home disturbed Bell and Sylvia not a little. He was generally at home between eight and nine on market days. They expected to see him the worse for liquor at such times; but this did not shock them; he was no worse than most of his neighbours, indeed better than several, who went off once or twice a year, or even oftener, on drinking bouts of two or three days' duration, returning pale, sodden, and somewhat shame-faced, when all their money was done; and, after the conjugal reception was well over, settling down into hard-working and decently sober men until the temptation again got power over them. But, on market days, every man drank more than usual; every bargain or agreement was ratified by drink; they came from greater or less distances, either afoot or on horseback, and the "good accommodation for man and beast" (as the old inn-

signs expressed it) always included a considerable amount of liquor to be drunk by the man.

Daniel's way of announcing his intention of drinking more than ordinary, was always the same. He would say at the last moment, "Missus, I've a mind to get fuddled to-neet," and be off, disregarding her look of remonstrance, and little heeding the injunctions she would call after him to beware of such and such companions, or to attend to his footsteps on his road home.

But this night he had given no such warning. Bell and Sylvia put the candle on the low window-seat at the usual hour to guide him through the fields—it was a habit kept up even on moonlight nights like this—and sate on each side of the fire, at first scarcely caring to listen, so secure were they of his return. Bell dozed, and Sylvia sate gazing at the fire with abstracted eyes, thinking of the past year and of the anniversary which was approaching of the day when she had last seen the lover whom she believed to be dead, lying somewhere fathoms deep beneath the surface of that sunny sea on which she looked day by day without ever seeing his up-turned face through the depths with whatsoever heart-sick longing for just one more sight she yearned and inwardly cried. If she could

set her eyes on his bright, handsome face, that face which was fading from her memory, overtasked in the too frequent efforts to recall it; if she could but see him once again, coming over the waters beneath which he lay with supernatural motion, awaiting her at the stile, with the evening sun shining ruddy into his bonny eyes, even though, after that one instant of vivid and visible life, he faded into mist; if she could but see him now, sitting in the faintly flickering fire-light in the old, happy, careless way, on a corner of the dresser, his legs dangling, his busy fingers playing with some of her woman's work;—she wrung her hands tight together as she implored some, any Power, to let her see him just once again—just once—for one minute of passionate delight. Never again would she forget that dear face, if but once more she might set her eyes upon it.

Her mother's head fell with a sudden jerk, and she roused herself up; and Sylvia put by her thought of the dead, and her craving after his presence into that receptacle of her heart where all such are kept closed and sacred from the light of common day.

"Feyther's late," said Bell.

"It's gone eight," replied Sylvia.

"But our clock is better nor an hour forrard," answered Bell.

"Ay, but t' wind brings Monkshaven bells clear to-night. I heerd t' eight o'clock bell ringing not five minutes ago."

It was the fire-bell, but she had not distinguished the sound.

There was another long silence; both wide awake this time.

"He'll have his rheumatics again," said Bell.

"It's cold for sartain," said Sylvia. "March weather come afore its time. But I'll make him a treacle-posset; it's a famous thing for keeping off hoasts."

The treacle-posset was entertainment enough for both while it was being made. But once placed in a little basin in the oven, there was again time for wonder and anxiety.

"He said nought about having a bout, did he, mother?" asked Sylvia at length.

"No," said Bell, her face a little contracting. After a while she added, "There's many a one as has husbands that goes off drinking without iver saying a word to their wives. My master is none o' that mak'."

"Mother," broke in Sylvia again, "I'll just go and get t' lantern out of t' shippen, and go up t' brow, and mebbe to t' ash-field end."

"Do, lass," said her mother. "I'll get my wraps and go with thee."

"Thou shall do niver such a thing," said Sylvia. "Thou's too frail to go out i' t' night air such a night as this."

"Then call Kester up."

"Not I. I'm noane afraid o' t' dark."

"But of what thou mayst meet i' t' dark, lass?"

Sylvia shivered all over at the sudden thought, suggested by this speech of her mother's, that the idea that had flashed into her own mind of going to look for her father might be an answer to the invocation to the Powers which she had made not long ago; that she might indeed meet her dead lover at the ash-field stile; but though she shivered as this superstitious fancy came into her head, her heart beat firm and regular; not from darkness nor from the spirits of the dead was she going to shrink; he great sorrow had taken away all her girlish nervous fear.

She went; and she came back. Neither man nor spirit had she seen; the wind was blowing on the height enough to sweep all creatures before it; but no one was coming.

So they sate down again to keep watch. At

length his step was heard close to the door; and it startled them even in their state of expectation.

"Why, feyther!" cried Sylvia as he entered; while his wife stood up trembling, but not saying a word.

"A'm a'most done up," said he, sitting heavily down on the chair nearest the door.

"Poor old feyther!" said Sylvia, stooping to take off his heavy clogged shoes; while Bell took the posset out of the oven.

"What's this? posset? what creatures women is for slops," said he; but he drank it all the same, while Sylvia fastened the door, and brought the flaring candle from the window-seat. The fresh arrangement of light displayed his face blackened with smoke, and his clothes disarranged and torn.

"Who's been melling wi' thee?" asked Bell.

"No one has melled wi' me; but a've been mellin' wi' t' gang at last."

"Thee: they niver were for pressing thee!" exclaimed both the women at once.

"No! they knowed better. They'n getten their belly-full as it is. Next time they try it on, a reckon they'll ax if Daniel Robson is wi'in hearin'. A've led a resky this neet, and saved nine or ten honest chaps as was pressed, and carried off to t' Randyvowse.

Me and some others did it. And Hobbs' things and t' lieutenant's is a' burnt; and by this time a reckon t' Randyvowse is pretty nigh four walls, ready for a parish-pound."

"Thou'rt niver for saying thou burnt it down wi' t' gang in it, for sure?" asked Bell.

"Na, na, not this time. T' gang fled up t' hill like coneys; and Hobbs and his folks carried off a bag o' money; but t' oud tumbledown place is just a heap o' brick and mortar; an' t' furniture is smoulderin' int' ashes; and, best of a', t' men is free, and will niver be cotched wi' a fire-bell again."

And so he went on to tell of the ruse by which they had been enticed into the market-place; interrupted from time to time by their eager questions, and interrupting himself every now and then with exclamations of weariness and pain, which made him at last say,

"Now a'm willing to tell yo' a' about it to-morrow, for it's not ivery day a man can do such great things; but to-neet a mun go to bed, even if King George were wantin' for to know how a managed it a'."

He went wearily upstairs, and wife and daughter both strove their best to ease his aching limbs, and

make him comfortable. The warming-pan, only used on state occasions, was taken down and unpapered for his service; and as he got between the warm sheets, he thanked Sylvia and her mother in a sleepy voice, adding,—

"It's a vast o' comfort to think on yon poor lads as is sleepin' i' their own homes this neet," and then slumber fell upon him, and he was hardly roused by Bell's softly kissing his weather-beaten cheek, and saying low,—

"God bless thee, my man! Thou was allays for them that was down and put upon."

He murmured some monosyllabic reply, unheard by his wife, who stole away to undress herself noiselessly, and laid herself down on her side of the bed as gently as her stiffened limbs would permit.

They were late in rising the next morning. Kester was long since up and at his work among the cattle before he saw the house-door open to admit the fresh chill morning air; and even then Sylvia brushed softly, and went about almost on tip-toe. When the porridge was ready, Kester was called into his breakfast, which he took sitting at the dresser with the family. A large wooden platter stood in the middle; and each had a bowl of the same material filled with milk. The way was for every one to dip

his pewter spoon into the central dish, and convey as much or as little as he liked at a time of the hot porridge into his pure fresh milk. But to-day Bell told Kester to help himself all at once, and to take his bowl up to the master's room and keep him company. For Daniel was in bed, resting from his weariness, and bemoaning his painful bruises whenever he thought of them. But his mind was still so much occupied with the affair of the previous night, that Bell judged rightly that a new listener would give ease to his body as well as to his mind, and her proposal of Kester's carrying up his breakfast had been received by Daniel with satisfaction.

So Kester went up slowly, carrying his over-full basin tenderly, and seated himself on the step leading down into the bed-room (for levels had not been calculated when the old house was built) facing his master, who, half sitting up in the blue check bed, not unwillingly began his relation again; to which Kester listened so attentively, that his spoon was often arrested in its progress from the basin to his mouth, open ready to receive it, while he gazed with unwinking eyes at Daniel narrating his exploits.

But after Daniel had fought his battles o'er again to every auditor within his reach, he found the seclusion of his chamber rather oppressive, without

even the usual week-days' noises below; so after dinner, though far from well, he came down, and wandered about the stable and the fields nearest to the house, consulting with Kester as to crops and manure for the most part; but every now and then breaking out into an episodical chuckle over some part of last night's proceedings. Kester enjoyed the day even more than his master, for he had no bruises to remind him that, although a hero, he was also flesh and blood.

When they returned to the house they found Philip there, for it was already dusk. It was Kester's usual Sunday plan to withdraw to bed at as early an hour as he could manage to sleep, often in winter before six; but now he was too full of interest in what Philip might have to tell of Monkshaven news to forego his Sabbath privilege of spending the evening sitting on the chair at the end of the dresser behind the door.

Philip was as close to Sylvia as he could possibly get without giving her offence, when they came in. Her manner was listless and civil; she had lost all that active feeling towards him which made him positively distasteful, and had called out her girlish irritation and impertinence. She now was rather glad to see him than otherwise. He brought some

change into the heavy monotony of her life—monotony so peaceful until she had been stirred by passion out of that content with the small daily events which had now become burdensome recurrences. Insensibly to herself she was becoming dependent on his timid devotion, his constant attention; and he, lover-like, once so attracted, in spite of his judgment, by her liveliness and piquancy, now doted on her languor, and thought her silence more sweet than words.

He had only just arrived when master and man came in. He had been to afternoon chapel; none of them had thought of going to the distant church; worship with them was only an occasional duty, and this day their minds had been too full of the events of the night before. Daniel sate himself heavily down in his accustomed chair, the three-cornered arm-chair in the fireside corner, which no one ever thought of anybody else ever occupying on any occasion whatever. In a minute or two he interrupted Philip's words of greeting and inquiry by breaking out into the story of the rescue of last night. But to the mute surprise of Sylvia, the only one who noticed it, Philip's face, instead of expressing admiration and pleasant wonder, lengthened into dismay; once or twice he began to interrupt, but stopped himself as if

he would consider his words again. Kester was never tired of hearing his master talk; by long living together they understood every fold of each other's minds, and small expressions had much significance to them. Bell, too, sate thankful that her husband should have done such deeds. Only Sylvia was made uneasy by Philip's face and manner. When Daniel had ended there was a great silence, instead of the questions and compliments he looked to receive. He became testy, and turning to Bell, said,—

"My nephew looks as though he was a-thinking more on t' little profit he has made on his pins an' bobs, than as if he was heeding how honest men were saved from being haled out to yon tender, an' carried out o' sight o' wives and little 'uns for iver. Wives an' little 'uns may go to t' workhouse or clem for aught he cares."

Philip went very red, and then more sallow than usual. He had not been thinking of Charley Kinraid, but of quite another thing, while Daniel had told his story; but this last speech of the old man's brought up the remembrance that was always quick, do what he would to smother or strangle it. He did not speak for a moment or two, then he said,—

"To-day has not been like Sabbath in Monkshaven.

T' rioters, as folks call 'em, have been about all night. They wanted to give battle to t' men-o'-war's men; and it were taken up by th' better end, and they've sent to my Lord Malton for t' militia; and they're come into t' town, and they're hunting for a justice for t' read th' act; folk do say there'll be niver a shop opened to-morrow."

This was rather a more serious account of the progress of the affair than any one had calculated upon. They looked grave upon it awhile, then Daniel took heart and said,—

"A think we'd done a'most enough last neet; but men's not to be stopped wi' a straw when their blood is up; still it's hard lines to call out t' sojers, even if they be but militia. So what we seven hatched in a dark entry has ta'en a lord to put a stop to 't!" continued he, chuckling a little, but more faintly this time.

Philip went on, still graver than before, boldly continuing to say what he knew would be discordant to the family he loved so well.

"I should ha' telled yo' all about it; I thought on it just as a bit o' news; I'd niver thought on such a thing as uncle there having been in it, and I'm main sorry to hear on it, I am."

"Why?" said Sylvia, breathlessly.

"It's niver a thing to be sorry on. I'm proud and glad," said Bell.

"Let-a-be, let-a-be," said Daniel, in much dudgeon. "A were a fool to tell him o' such-like doings, they're noane i' his line; we'll talk on yard measures now."

Philip took no notice of this poor attempt at sarcasm: he seemed as if lost in thought, then he said,—

"I'm vexed to plague yo', but I 'd best say all I've got i' my mind. There was a vast o' folk at our chapel speaking about it—last night's doings and this morning's work—and how them as set it afoot was assured o' being clapt int' prison and tried for it; and when I heered uncle say as he was one, it like ran through me; for they say as t' justices will be all on t' Government side, and mad for vengeance."

For an instant there was dead silence. The women looked at each other with blank eyes, as if they were as yet unable to take in the new idea that the conduct which had seemed to them a subject for such just pride could be regarded by any one as deserving of punishment or retribution. Daniel spoke before they had recovered from their amazement.

"A'm noane sorry for what a did, an' a'd do it again to-neet if need were. So theere's for thee. Thou may tell t' justices fra' me that a reckon a did righter nor them, as letten poor fellys be carried off i' t' very midst o' t' town they're called justices for."

Perhaps Philip had better have held his tongue; but he believed in the danger, which he was anxious to impress upon his uncle, in order that, knowing what was to be apprehended, the latter might take some pains to avert it.

He went on.

"But they're making a coil about the Randyvowse being all destroyed!"

Daniel had taken down his pipe from the shelf in the chimney corner, and was stuffing tobacco into the bowl. He went on pretending to do this a little while after it was filled; for to tell the truth he was beginning to feel uncomfortable at the new view of his conduct presented to him. Still he was not going to let this appear, so lifting up his head with an indifferent air he lighted the pipe, blew into it, took it out and examined it as if something were wrong about it, and until that was put to rights he was unable to attend to anything else; all the while the faithful three who hung upon

his well-being, gazing, breathless, at his proceedings, and anxious for his reply.

"Randyvowse!" said he at length, "it were a good job it were brenned down, for such a harbour for vermin a never seed; t' rats ran across t' yard by hunders an' thousands; an' it were no man's property as a've heerd tell, but belonged to Chancery, up i' Lunnon; so wheere 's t' harm done, my fine felly?"

Philip was silent. He did not care to brave any further his uncle's angry frown and contracted eye. If he had only known of Daniel Robson's part in the riot before he had left the town, he would have taken care to have had better authority for the reality of the danger which he had heard spoken about, and in which he could not help believing. As it was he could only keep quiet until he had ascertained what was the legal peril overhanging the rioters, and how far his uncle had been recognized.

Daniel went on puffing angrily. Kester sighed audibly, and then was sorry he had done so, and began to whistle. Bell, full of her new fear, yet desirous to bring all present into some kind of harmony, said,

"It'll ha' been a loss to John Hobbs—all his

things burnt, or trampled on. Mebbe he desarved it all, but one's a kind o' tender feeling to one's tables and chairs, special if one's had t' bees-waxing on 'em."

"A wish he'd been burnt on t' top on 'em. A do," growled out Daniel, shaking the ash out of his pipe.

"Don't speak so ill o' thysel'," said his wife. "Thou'd ha' been t' first to pluck him down if he'd screeched out."

"An' a'll warrant if they come about wi' a paper asking for feyther's name to make up for what Hobbs has lost by t' fire, feyther 'll be for giving him summut," said Sylvia.

"Thou knows nought about it," said Daniel. "Hold thy tongue next time till thou's axed to speak, my wench."

His sharp irritated way of speaking was so new to Sylvia, that the tears sprang to her eyes, and her lip quivered. Philip saw it all, and yearned over her. He plunged headlong into some other subject to try and divert attention from her; but Daniel was too ill at ease to talk much, and Bell was obliged to try and keep up the semblance of conversation, with an occasional word or two from Kester, who seemed instinctively to fall into

her way of thinking and to endeavour to keep the dark thought in the background.

Sylvia stole off to bed; more concerned at her father's angry way of speaking than at the idea of his being amenable to law for what he had done; the one was a sharp present evil, the other something distant and unlikely. Yet a dim terror of this latter evil hung over her, and once upstairs she threw herself on her bed and sobbed. Philip heard her where he sate near the bottom of the short steep staircase, and at every sob the cords of love round his heart seemed tightened, and he felt as if he must there and then do something to console her.

But, instead, he sat on talking of nothings, a conversation in which Daniel joined with somewhat of surliness, while Bell, grave and anxious, kept wistfully looking from one to the other, desirous of gleaning some further information on the subject, which had begun to trouble her mind. She hoped some chance would give her the opportunity of privately questioning Philip, but it seemed to be equally her husband's wish to thwart any such intention of hers. He remained in the house-place, till after Philip had left, although he was evidently so much fatigued as to give some very distinct,

though unintentional hints to his visitor to be gone.

At length the house-door was locked on Philip, and then Daniel prepared to go to bed. Kester had left for his loft above the shippen more than an hour before. Bell had still to rake the fire, and then she would follow her husband upstairs.

As she was scraping up the ashes, she heard, intermixed with the noise she was making, the sound of some one rapping gently at the window. In her then frame of mind she started a little; but on looking round, she saw Kester's face pressed against the glass, and, reassured, she softly opened the door. There he stood in the dusk outer air, distinct against the grey darkness beyond, and in his hand something which she presently perceived was a pitchfork.

"Missus!" whispered he, "a've watched t' maister t' bed; an' now a'd be greatly beholden to yo' if yo'd let me just lay me down i' t' house-place. A'd warrant niver a constable i' a' Monkshaven should get sight o' t' maister, an' me below t' keep ward."

Bell shivered a little.

"Nay, Kester," said she, patting her hand kindly on his shoulder; "there's nought for t' fear. Thy

master is not one for t' hurt nobody; and I dunnot think they can harm him for setting yon poor chaps free, as t' gang catched i' their wicked trap."

Kester stood still; then he shook his head slowly.

"It's t' work at t' Randyvowse as a'm afeared on. Some folks thinks such a deal o' a bonfire. Then a may lay me down afore t' fire, missus?" said he, beseechingly.

"Nay, Kester—" she began; but suddenly changing, she said, "God bless thee, my man; come in and lay thee down on t' settle, and I'll cover thee up wi' my cloak as hangs behind t' door. We're not many on us that love him, an' we'll be all on us under one roof, an' niver a stone wall or a lock betwixt us."

So Kester took up his rest in the house-place that night, and none knew of it besides Bell.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING TROUBLES.

The morning brought more peace if it did not entirely dissipate fear. Daniel seemed to have got over his irritability, and was unusually kind and tender to wife and daughter, especially striving by silent little deeds to make up for the sharp words he had said the night before to the latter.

As if by common consent, all allusion to the Saturday night's proceedings was avoided. They spoke of the day's work before them; of the crops to be sown; of the cattle; of the markets; but each one was conscious of a wish to know more distinctly what were the chances of the danger that, to judge from Philip's words, hung over them, falling upon them and cutting them off from all these places for the coming days.

Bell longed to send Kester down into Monkshaven as a sort of spy to see how the land lay; but she dared not manifest her anxiety to her husband,

and could not see Kester alone. She wished that she had told him to go to the town, when she had had him to herself in the house-place the night before; now it seemed as though Daniel were resolved not to part from him, and as though both had forgotten that any peril had been anticipated. Sylvia and her mother, in like manner, clung together, not speaking of their fears, yet each knowing that it was ever present in the other's mind.

So things went on till twelve o'clock—dinner-time. If at any time that morning they had had the courage to speak together on the thought which was engrossing all their minds, it is possible that some means might have been found to avert the calamity that was coming towards them with swift feet. But among the uneducated—the partially educated—nay, even the weakly educated—the feeling exists which prompted the futile experiment of the well-known ostrich. They imagine that, by closing their own eyes to apprehended evil, they avert it. The expression of fear is supposed to accelerate the coming of its cause. Yet, on the other hand they shrink from acknowledging the long continuance of any blessing, in the idea that when unusual happiness is spoken about, it dis-

appears. So, although perpetual complaints of past or present grievances and sorrows are most common among this class, they shrink from embodying apprehensions for the future in words, as if it then took shape and drew near.

They all four sate down to dinner, but not one of them was inclined to eat. The food was scarcely touched on their plates, yet they were trying to make talk among themselves as usual; they seemed as though they dared not let themselves be silent, when Sylvia, sitting opposite to the window, saw Philip at the top of the brow, running rapidly towards the farm. She had been so full of the anticipation of some kind of misfortune all the morning that she felt now as if this was the very precursive circumstance she had been expecting; she stood up, turning quite white, and, pointing with her finger, said,

"There he is!"

Every one at table stood up too. An instant afterwards, Philip, breathless, was in the room.

He gasped out, "They're coming! the warrant is out. You must go. I hoped you were gone."

"God help us!" said Bell, and sate suddenly down, as if she had received a blow that made her collapse into helplessness; but she got up again directly.

Sylvia flew for her father's hat. He really seemed the most unmoved of the party.

"A'm noane afeared," said he. "A'd do it o'er again, a would; an' a'll tell 'em so. It's a fine time o' day when men's to be trapped and carried off, an' them as lays traps to set 'em free is to be put i' t' lock-ups for it."

"But there was rioting, beside the rescue; t' house was burnt," continued eager, breathless Philip.

"An' a'm noane goin' t' say a'm sorry for that, neyther; tho', mebbe, a wouldn't do it again."

Sylvia had his hat on his head by this time; and Bell, wan and stiff, trembling all over, had his overcoat, and his leather purse with the few coins she could muster, ready for him to put on.

He looked at these preparations, at his wife and daughter, and his colour changed from its ruddy brown.

"A'd face lock-ups, an' a fair spell o' jail, but for these," said he, hesitating.

"Oh!" said Philip, "for God's sake, lose no time, but be off."

"Where mun he go?" asked Bell, as if Philip must decide all.

"Anywhere, anywhere, out of this house—say Haverstone. This evening, I'll go and meet him

there and plan further; only be off now." Philip was so keenly eager, he hardly took note at the time of Sylvia's one vivid look of unspoken thanks, yet he remembered it afterwards.

"A'll dang 'em dead," said Kester, rushing to the door, for he saw what the others did not—that all chance of escape was over; the constables were already at the top of the little field-path not twenty yards off.

"Hide him, hide him," cried Bell, wringing her hands in terror; for she, indeed they all, knew that flight would now be impossible. Daniel was heavy, rheumatic, and, moreover, had been pretty severely bruised on that unlucky night.

Philip, without another word, pushed Daniel before him upstairs, feeling that his own presence at Haytersbank Farm at that hour of the day would be a betrayal. They had just time to shut themselves up in the larger bed-room, before they heard a scuffle and the constables' entry downstairs.

"They're in," said Philip, as Daniel squeezed himself under the bed; and then they held quite still, Philip as much concealed by the scanty, blue-check curtain as he could manage to be. They heard a confusion of voices below, a hasty moving of chairs, a banging of doors, a further parley, and then

a woman's scream, shrill and pitiful; then steps on the stairs.

"That screech spoiled all," sighed Philip.

In one instant the door was opened, and each of the hiders was conscious of the presence of the constables, although at first the latter stood motionless, surveying the apparently empty room with disappointment. Then in another moment they had rushed at Philip's legs, exposed as these were. They drew him out with violence, and then let him go.

"Measter Hepburn!" said one in amaze. But immediately they put two and two together; for in so small a place as Monkshaven every one's relationships and connections, and even likings, were known; and the motive of Philip's coming out to Haytersbank was perfectly clear to these men.

"T' other 'll not be far off," said the other constable. "His plate were downstair, full o' victual; a seed Measter Hepburn a-walking briskly before me as a left Monkshaven."

"Here he be, here he be," called out the other man, dragging Daniel out by his legs, "we've getten him."

Daniel kicked violently, and came out from his hiding-place in a less ignominious way than by being pulled out by his heels.

He shook himself, and then turned, facing his captors.

"A wish a'd niver hidden mysel'; it were his doing," jerking his thumb towards Philip: "a'm ready to stand by what a've done. Yo've getten a warrant a'll be bound, for them justices is grand at writin' when t' fight's over."

He was trying to carry it off with bravado, but Philip saw that he had received a shock, from his sudden look of withered colour and shrunken feature.

"Don't handcuff him," said Philip, putting money into the constable's hand. "You'll be able to guard him well enough without them things."

Daniel turned round sharp at this whisper.

"Let-a-be, let-a-be, my lad," he said. "It 'll be summut to think on i' t' lock-up how two able-bodied fellys were so afeared on t' chap as reskyed them honest sailors o' Saturday neet, as they mun put him i' gyves, and he sixty-two come Martinmas, and sore laid up wi' t' rheumatics."

But it was difficult to keep up this tone of bravado when he was led a prisoner through his own house-place, and saw his poor wife quivering and shaking all over with her efforts to keep back all signs of emotion until he was gone; and Sylvia standing by

her mother, her arm round Bell's waist and stroking the poor shrunken fingers which worked so perpetually and nervously in futile unconscious restlessness. Kester was in a corner of the room, sullenly standing.

Bell quaked from head to foot as her husband came downstairs a prisoner. She opened her lips several times with an uneasy motion, as if she would fain say something, but knew not what. Sylvia's passionate swollen lips and her beautiful defiant eyes gave her face quite a new aspect; she looked a helpless fury.

"A may kiss my missus, a reckon," said Daniel, coming to a standstill as he passed near her.

"Oh, Dannel, Dannel!" cried she, opening her arms wide to receive him. "Dannel, Dannel, my man!" and she shook with her crying, laying her head on his shoulder, as if he was all her stay and comfort.

"Come, missus! come, missus!" said he, "there couldn't be more ado if a'd been guilty o' murder, an' yet a say again, as a said afore, a'm noane ashamed o' my doings. Here, Sylvie, lass, tak' thy mother off me, for a cannot do it mysel', it like sets me off." His voice was quavering as he said this. But he cheered up a little and said, "Now, good-by, oud wench"

(kissing her), "and keep a good heart, and let me see thee lookin' lusty and strong when a come back. Good-by, my lass; look well after mother, and ask Philip for guidance if it's needed."

He was taken out of his home, and then arose the shrill cries of the women; but in a minute or two they were checked by the return of one of the constables, who, cap in hand at the sight of so much grief, said,

"He wants a word wi' his daughter."

The party had come to a halt about ten yards from the house. Sylvia, hastily wiping her tears on her apron, ran out and threw her arms round her father, as if to burst out afresh on his neck.

"Nay, nay, my wench, it's thee as mun be a comfort to mother: nay, nay, or thou'll niver hear what a've got to say. Sylvie, my lass, a'm main an' sorry a were so short wi' thee last neet; a ax thy pardon, lass, a were cross to thee, and sent thee to thy bed wi' a sore heart. Thou munnot think on it again, but forgie me, now a'm leavin' thee."

"Oh, feyther! feyther!" was all Sylvia could say; and at last they had to make as they would have used force to separate her from their prisoner.

Philip took her hand, and softly led her back to her weeping mother.

For some time nothing was to be heard in the little farmhouse kitchen but the sobbing and wailing of the women. Philip stood by silent, thinking, as well as he could, for his keen sympathy with their grief, what had best be done next. Kester, after some growls at Sylvia for having held back the uplifted arm which he thought might have saved Daniel by a well-considered blow on his captors as they entered the house, went back into his shippen—his cell for meditation and consolation, where he might hope to soothe himself before going out to his afternoon's work; labour which his master had planned for him that very morning; with a strange foresight, as Kester thought, for the job was one which would take him two or three days without needing any further directions than those he had received, and by the end of that time he thought that his master would be at liberty again. So he — so they all thought, in their ignorance and inexperience.

Although Daniel himself was unreasoning, hasty, impulsive—in a word, often thinking and acting very foolishly—yet, somehow, either from some quality in his character, or from the loyalty of nature in those with whom he had to deal in his every-day life,

he had made his place and position clear as the arbiter and law-giver of his household. On his decision, as that of husband, father, master, perhaps superior natures waited. So now that he was gone and had left them in such strange new circumstances so suddenly, it seemed as though neither Bell nor Sylvia knew exactly what to do when their grief was spent, so much had every household action and plan been regulated by the thought of him. Meanwhile Philip had slowly been arriving at the conclusion that he was more wanted in Monkshaven to look after Daniel's interests, to learn what were the legal probabilities in consequence of the old man's arrest, and to arrange for his family accordingly, than standing still and silent in the Haytersbank kitchen, too full of fellow-feeling and heavy foreboding to comfort, awkwardly unsympathetic in appearance from the very aching of his heart.

So when his aunt, with instinctive sense of regularity and propriety, began to put away the scarcely tasted dinner, and Sylvia, blinded with crying, and convulsively sobbing, was yet trying to help her mother, Philip took his hat, and brushing it round and round with the sleeve of his coat, said,—

"I think I'll just go back, and see how matters

stand." He had a more distinct plan in his head than these words implied, but it depended on so many contingencies of which he was ignorant that he said only these few words; and with a silent resolution to see them again that day, but a dread of being compelled to express his fears, so far beyond theirs, he went off without saying anything more. Then Sylvia lifted up her voice with a great cry. Somehow she had expected him to do something—what, she did not know; but he was gone, and they were left without stay or help.

"Hush thee, hush thee," said her mother, trembling all over herself; "it's for the best. The Lord knows."

"But I niver thought he'd leave us," moaned Sylvia, half in her mother's arms, and thinking of Philip. Her mother took the words as applied to Daniel.

"And he'd niver ha' left us, my wench, if he could ha' stayed."

"Oh, mother, mother, it's Philip as has left us, and he could ha' stayed."

"He'll come back, or mebbe send, I'll be bound. Leastways he'll be gone to see feyther, and he'll need comfort most on all, in a fremd place—in Bridewell—and niver a morsel of victual or a piece

o' money." And now she sate down, and wept the dry hot tears that come with such difficulty to the eyes of the aged. And so—first one grieving, and then the other, and each draining her own heart of every possible hope by way of comfort, alternately trying to cheer and console—the February afternoon passed away; the continuous rain closing in the daylight even earlier than usual, and adding to the dreariness, with the natural accompaniments of wailing winds, coming with long sweeps over the moors, and making the sobbings at the windows that always sound like the gasps of some one in great agony. Meanwhile Philip had hastened back to Monkshaven. He had no umbrella, he had to face the driving rain for the greater part of the way; but he was thankful to the weather, for it kept men indoors, and he wanted to meet no one, but to have time to think and mature his plans. The town itself was, so to speak, in mourning. The rescue of the sailors was a distinctly popular movement; the subsequent violence (which had, indeed, gone much further than has been described, after Daniel left it) was, in general, considered as only a kind of due punishment inflicted in wild justice on the press-gang and their abettors. The feeling of the Monkshaven people was, therefore, in de-

cided opposition to the vigorous steps taken by the county magistrates, who, in consequence of an appeal from the naval officers in charge of the impressment service, had called out the militia (from a distant and inland county) stationed within a few miles, and had thus summarily quenched the riots that were continuing on the Sunday morning after a somewhat languid fashion; the greater part of the destruction of property having been accomplished during the previous night. Still there was little doubt but that the violence would have been renewed as evening drew on and the more desperate part of the population and the enraged sailors had had the Sabbath leisure to brood over their wrongs, and to encourage each other in a passionate attempt at redress, or revenge. So the authorities were quite justified in the decided steps they had taken, both in their own estimation then, and now, in ours, looking back on the affair in cold blood. But at the time feeling ran strongly against them; and all means of expressing itself in action being prevented, men brooded sullenly in their own houses. Philip, as the representative of the family, the head of which was now suffering for his deeds in the popular cause, would have met with more sympathy, ay, and more respect

than he imagined, as he went along the streets, glancing from side to side, fearful of meeting some who would shy him as the relation of one who had been ignominiously taken to Bridewell a few hours before. But in spite of this wincing of Philip's from observation and remark, he never dreamed of acting otherwise than as became a brave true friend. And this he did, and would have done, from a natural faithfulness and constancy of disposition, without any special regard for Sylvia.

He knew his services were needed in the shop; business which he had left at a moment's warning awaited him, unfinished; but at this time he could not bear the torture of giving explanations, and alleging reasons to the languid intelligence and slow sympathies of Coulson.

He went to the offices of Mr. Donkin, the oldest established and most respected attorney in Monkshaven—he who had been employed to draw up the law papers and deeds of partnership consequent on Hepburn and Coulson succeeding to the shop of John and Jeremiah Foster, Brothers.

Mr. Donkin knew Philip from this circumstance. But, indeed, nearly every one in Monkshaven knew each other; if not enough to speak to, at

least enough to be acquainted with the personal appearance and reputation of most of those whom they met in the streets. It so happened that Mr. Donkin had a favourable opinion of Philip; and perhaps for this reason the latter had a shorter time to wait before he obtained an interview with the head of the house, than many of the clients who came for that purpose from town or country for many miles round.

Philip was ushered in. Mr. Donkin sate with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead, ready to watch his countenance and listen to his words.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hepburn!"

"Good afternoon, sir." Philip hesitated how to begin. Mr. Donkin became impatient, and tapped with the fingers of his left hand on his desk. Philip's sensitive nerves felt and rightly interpreted the action.

"Please, sir, I'm come to speak to you about Daniel Robson, of Haytersbank Farm."

"Daniel Robson?" said Mr. Donkin, after a short pause, to try and compel Philip into speed in his story.

"Yes, sir. He's been taken up on account of this affair, sir, about the press-gang on Saturday night."

"To be sure! I thought I knew the name." And

Mr. Donkin's face became graver, and the expression more concentrated. Looking up suddenly at Philip, he said: "You are aware that I am the clerk to the magistrates?"

"No, sir," in a tone that indicated the unexpressed "What then?"

"Well, but I am. And so of course, if you want my services or advice in favour of a prisoner whom they have committed, or are going to commit, you can't have them, that's all."

"I am very sorry—very!" said Philip; and then he was again silent for a period; long enough to make the busy attorney impatient.

"Well! Mr. Hepburn, have you anything else to say to me?"

"Yes, sir. I've a deal to ask of you; for you see I don't rightly understand what to do; and yet I'm all as Daniel's wife and daughter has to look to; and I've their grief heavy on my heart. You could not tell me what is to be done with Daniel, could you, sir?"

"He'll be brought up before the magistrates to-morrow morning for final examination, along with the others, you know, before he's sent to York Castle to take his trial at the spring assizes."

"To York Castle, sir?"

Mr. Donkin nodded, as if words were too precious to waste.

"And when will he go?" asked poor Philip, in dismay.

"To-morrow: most probably as soon as the examination is over. The evidence is clear as to his being present, aiding and abetting,—indicted on the 4th section of 1 George I., statute 1, chapter 5. I'm afraid it's a bad look-out. Is he a friend of yours, Mr. Hepburn?"

"Only an uncle, sir," said Philip, his heart getting full; more from Mr. Donkin's manner than from his words. "But what can they do to him, sir?"

"Do?" Mr. Donkin half smiled at the ignorance displayed. "Why, hang him, to be sure; if the judge is in a hanging mood. He's been either a principal in the offence, or a principal in the second degree, and, as such, liable to the full punishment. I drew up the warrant myself this morning, though I left the exact name to be filled up by my clerk."

"Oh, sir! can you do nothing for me?" asked Philip, with sharp beseeching in his voice. He had never imagined that it was a capital offence; and the thought of his aunt's and Sylvia's ignorance of

the possible fate awaiting him whom they so much loved, was like a stab to his heart.

"No, my good fellow. I'm sorry; but, you see, it's my duty to do all I can to bring criminals to justice."

"My uncle thought he was doing such a fine deed."

"Demolishing and pulling down, destroying and burning dwelling-houses and outhouses," said Mr. Donkin. "He must have some peculiar notions."

"The people is so mad with the press-gang, and Daniel has been at sea hisself; and took it so to heart when he heard of mariners and seafaring folk being carried off, and just cheated into doing what was kind and helpful—leastways, what would have been kind and helpful, if there had been a fire. I'm against violence and riots myself, sir, I'm sure; but I cannot help thinking as Daniel had a deal to justify him on Saturday night, sir."

"Well; you must try and get a good lawyer to bring out all that side of the question. There's a good deal to be said on it; but it's my duty to get up all the evidence to prove that he and others were present on the night in question; so, as you'll perceive, I can give you no help in defending him."

"But who can, sir? I came to you as a friend who, I thought, would see me through it. And I don't know any other lawyer; leastways, to speak to."

Mr. Donkin was really more concerned for the misguided rioters than he was aware; and he was aware of more interest than he cared to express. So he softened his tone a little, and tried to give the best advice in his power.

"You'd better go to Edward Dawson on the other side of the river; he that was articled clerk with me two years ago, you know. He's a clever fellow, and has not too much practice; he'll do the best he can for you. He'll have to be at the court-house, tell him, to-morrow morning at ten, when the justices meet. He'll watch the case for you; and then he'll give you his opinion, and tell you what to do. You can't do better than follow his advice. I must do all I can to collect evidence for a conviction, you know."

Philip stood up, looked at his hat, and then came forward and laid down six and eightpence on the desk in a blushing, awkward way.

"Pooh! pooh!" said Mr. Donkin, pushing the money away. "Don't be a fool; you'll need it all before the trial's over. I've done nothing, man.

It would be a pretty thing for me to be feed by both parties."

Philip took up the money, and left the room. In an instant he came back again, glanced furtively at Mr. Donkin's face, and then, once more having recourse to brushing his hat, he said, in a low voice—

"You'll not be hard upon him, sir, I hope?"

"I must do my duty," replied Mr. Donkin, a little sternly, "without any question of hardness."

Philip, discomfited, left the room; an instant of thought and Mr. Donkin had jumped up, and hastening to the door he opened it and called after Philip.

"Hepburn—Hepburn—I say, he'll be taken to York as soon as may be to-morrow morning; if any one wants to see him before then, they'd better look sharp about it."

Philip went quickly along the streets towards Mr. Dawson's, pondering upon the meaning of all that he had heard, and what he had better do. He had made his plans pretty clearly out by the time he arrived at Mr. Dawson's smart door in one of the new streets on the other side of the river. A clerk as smart as the door answered Philip's hesitating knock, and replied to his inquiry as to whether

Mr. Dawson was at home in the negative, adding, after a moment's pause—

"He'll be at home in less than an hour; he's only gone to make Mrs. Dawson's will—Mrs. Dawson, of Collyton—she's not expected to get better."

Probably the clerk of an older-established attorney would not have given so many particulars as to the nature of his master's employment; but, as it happened it was of no consequence, the unnecessary information made no impression on Philip's mind; he thought the matter over, and then said—

"I'll be back in an hour, then. It's gone a quarter to four; I'll be back before five, tell Mr. Dawson."

He turned on his heel and went back to the High Street as fast as he could, with a far more prompt and decided step than before. He hastened through the streets, emptied by the bad weather, to the principal inn of the town, the George—the sign of which was fastened to a piece of wood stretched across the narrow street; and going up to the bar with some timidity (for the inn was frequented by the gentry of Monkshaven and the neighbourhood, and was considered as a touch above such customers as Philip), he asked if he could have a tax-cart made ready in a quarter of an hour, and sent up to the door of his shop.

"To be sure he could; how far was it to go?"

Philip hesitated before he replied—

"Up the Knotting Lane, to the stile leading down to Haytersbank Farm; they'll have to wait there for some as are coming."

"They must not wait long, such an evening as this; standing in such rain and wind as there'll be up there, is enough to kill a horse."

"They shan't wait long," said Philip, decisively: "in a quarter of an hour, mind."

He now went back to the shop, beating against the storm which was increasing as the tide came in, and the night hours approached.

Coulson had no word for him, but he looked reproachfully at his partner for his long unexplained absence. Hester was putting away the ribbons and handkerchiefs, and bright-coloured things which had been used to deck the window; for no more customers were likely to come this night through the blustering weather to a shop dimly lighted by two tallow candles and an inefficient oil-lamp. Philip came up to her, and stood looking at her with unseeing eyes, but the strange consciousness of his fixed stare made her uncomfortable, and called the faint flush to her pale cheeks; and at length compelled her, as it were, to speak, and break the spell of the

silence. So, curiously enough, all three spoke at once. Hester asked (without looking at Philip)—

"Yo're sadly wet, I'm feared?"

Coulson said—

"Thou might have a bit o' news to tell one after being on the gad all afternoon."

Philip whispered to Hester—

"Wilt come into t' parlour? I want a word wi' thee by oursel's."

Hester quietly finished rolling up the ribbon she had in her hands when he spoke, and then followed him into the room behind the shop before spoken of.

Philip set down on the table the candle which he had brought out of the shop, and turning round to Hester, took her trembling hand into both of his, and gripping it nervously, said—

"Oh! Hester, thou must help me—thou will, will not thou?"

Hester gulped down something that seemed to rise in her throat and choke her, before she answered.

"Anything, thou knows, Philip."

"Yes, yes, I know. Thou sees the matter is this: Daniel Robson—he who married my aunt—is taken up for yon riot on Saturday night at t' Mariners' Arms——"

"They spoke on it this afternoon; they said the warrant was out," said Hester, filling up the sentence as Philip hesitated, lost for an instant in his own thoughts.

"Ay! the warrant is out, and he's in t' lock-up, and will be carried to York Castle to-morrow morn; and I'm afeared it will go bad with him: and they at Haytersbank is not prepared, and they must see him again before he goes. Now, Hester, will thou go in a tax-cart as will be here in less than ten minutes from t' George, and bring them back here, and they must stay all night for to be ready to see him to-morrow before he goes? It's dree weather for them, but they'll not mind that."

He had used words as if he was making a request to Hester; but he did not seem to await her answer, so sure was he that she would go. She noticed this, and noticed also that the rain was spoken of in reference to them, not to her. A cold shadow passed over her heart, though it was nothing more than she already knew—that Sylvia was the one centre of his thoughts and his love.

"I'll go put on my things at once," said she, gently.

Philip pressed her hand tenderly, a glow of gratitude overspread him.

"Thou's a real good one, God bless thee," said he. "Thou must take care of thyself, too," continued he; "there's wraps and plenty i' th' house, and if there are not there's those i' th' shop as 'll be none the worse for once wearing at such a time as this; and wrap thee well up, and take shawls and cloaks for them, and mind as they put 'em on. Thou'll have to get out at a stile, I'll tell t' driver where; and thou must get over t' stile and follow t' path down two fields, and th' house is right before ye, and bid 'em make haste and lock up th' house, for they mun stay all night here. Kester 'll look after things."

All this time Hester was hastily putting on her hat and cloak, which she had fetched from the closet where they usually hung through the day; now she stood listening as it were for final directions.

"But suppose they will not come," said she; "they dunnot know me, and mayn't believe my words."

"They must," said he impatiently. "They don't know what awaits 'em," he continued. "I'll tell thee, because thou 'll not let out, and it seems as if I mun tell some one—it were such a shock—he's to be tried for 's life. They know not it's so serious; and, Hester," said he, going on in his search

after sympathy, "she's like as if she was bound up in her father.

His lips quivered as he looked wistfully into Hester's face at these words. No need to tell her who was *she*. No need to put into words the fact, told plainer than words could have spoken it, that his heart was bound up in Sylvia.

Hester's face, instead of responding to his look, contracted a little, and for the life of her she could not have helped saying,

"Why don't yo' go yourself, Philip?"

"I can't, I can't," said he impatiently. "I'd give the world to go, for I might be able to comfort her; but there's lawyers to see, and iver so much to do, and they've niver a man friend but me to do it all. Yo'll tell her," said Philip insinuatingly, as if a fresh thought had struck him, "as how I would ha' come. I would fain ha' come for 'em, myself, but I couldn't, because of th' lawyer,—mind yo' say because of th' lawyer. I'd be loath for her to think I was minding any business of my own at this time; and, whatever yo' do, speak hopeful, and for t' life of yo', don't speak of th' hanging, it's likely it's a mistake o' Donkin's; and anyhow—there's t' cart—anyhow I should perhaps not ha' telled thee, but it's a comfort to

make a clean breast to a friend at times. God bless thee, Hester. I don't know what I should ha' done without thee," said he as he wrapped her well up in the cart, and placed the bundles of cloaks and things by her side.

Along the street in the jolting cart, as long as Hester could see the misty light streaming out of the shop door, so long was Philip standing bare-headed in the rain looking after her. But she knew, that it was not her own poor self that attracted his lingering gaze. It was the thought of the person she was bound to.

CHAPTER XII.

A DREARY VIGIL.

THROUGH the dark rain, against the cold wind, shaken over the rough stones, went Hester in the little tax-cart. Her heart kept rising against her fate; the hot tears came unbidden to her eyes. But rebellious heart was soothed, and hot tears were sent back to their source before the time came for her alighting.

The driver turned his horse in the narrow lane, and shouted after her an injunction to make haste as, with her head bent low, she struggled down to the path to Haytersbank Farm. She saw the light in the window from the top of the brow and involuntarily she slackened her pace. She had never seen Bell Robson, and would Sylvia recollect her? If she did not how awkward it would be to give the explanation of who she was, and what her errand was, and why she was sent.

Nevertheless, it must be done, so on she went, and standing within the little porch, she knocked faintly at the door; but in the bluster of the elements the sound was lost. Again she knocked, and now the murmur of women's voices inside was hushed, and some one came quickly to the door, and opened it sharply.

It was Sylvia. Although her face was completely in shadow of course Hester knew her well; but she, if indeed she would have recognized Hester less disguised, did not know in the least who the woman, muffled up in a great cloak with her hat tied down with a silk handkerchief, standing in the porch at this time of night could be. Nor indeed was she in a mood to care, or to inquire. She said hastily, in a voice rendered hoarse and arid with grief:

"Go away. This is no house for strangers to come to. We've enough on our own to think on;" and she hastily shut the door in Hester's face, before the latter could put together the right words in which to explain her errand. Hester stood outside in the dark wet porch discomfited, and wondering how next to obtain a hearing through the shut and bolted door. Not long did she stand, however; some one was again at the door, talking in a voice of distress and remonstrance, and slowly unbarring

the bolts. A tall thin figure of an elderly woman was seen against the warm fire-light inside as soon as the door was opened; a hand was put out, like that which took the dove into the ark, and Hester was drawn into the warmth and the light, while Bell's voice went on speaking to Sylvia before addressing the dripping stranger—

"It's not a night to turn a dog fra' t' door; it's ill letting our grief harden our hearts. But oh! missus (to Hester), yo' mun forgive us, for a great sorrow has fallen upon us this day, an' we're like beside ourselves wi' crying an' plaining."

Bell sate down, and threw her apron over her poor worn face, as if decently to shield the signs of her misery from a stranger's gaze. Sylvia, all tear-swollen, and looking askance and almost fiercely at the stranger who had made good her intrusion, was drawn as it were to her mother's side, and kneeling down by her, put her arms round her waist; and almost lay across her lap, still gazing at Hester with cold distrustful eyes, the expression of which repelled and daunted that poor unwilling messenger, and made her silent for a minute or so after her entrance. Bell suddenly put down her apron.

"Yo're cold and drenched," said she. "Come

near to t' fire and warm yo'rsel'; yo' mun pardon us if we dunnot think on everything at onest."

"Yo're very kind, very kind indeed," said Hester, touched by the poor woman's evident effort to forget her own grief in the duties of hospitality, and loving Bell from that moment.

"I'm Hester Rose," she continued, half addressing Sylvia, who she thought might remember the name, "and Philip Hepburn has sent me in a tax-cart to t' stile yonder, to fetch both on yo' back to Monkshaven." Sylvia raised her head and looked intently at Hester. Bell clasped her hands tight together and lent forwards.

"It's my master as wants us?" said she, in an eager questioning tone.

"It's for to see yo'r master," said Hester. "Philip says he'll be sent to York to-morrow, and yo'll be fain to see him before he goes, and if yo'll come down to Monkshaven to-night yo'll be on t' spot again' the time comes when t' justices will let ye."

Bell was up and about making for the place where she kept her out-going things almost before Hester had begun to speak. She hardly understood about her husband's being sent to York, in the possession of the idea that she might go and see

him. She did not understand or care how in this wild night she was to get to Monkshaven; all she thought of was that she might go and see her husband. But Sylvia took in more points than her mother, and almost suspiciously began to question Hester.

"Why are they sending him to York? What made Philip leave us? Why didn't he come hissel'?"

"He couldn't come hissel', he bade me say; because he was bound to be at the lawyer's at five, about yo'r father's business. I think yo' might ha' known he would ha' come for any business of his own; and, about York, it's Philip as telled me, and I never asked why. I never thought on yo'r asking me so many questions. I thought yo'd be ready to fly on any chance o' seeing your father." Hester spoke out the sad reproach that ran from her heart to her lips. To distrust Philip! to linger when she might hasten!

"Oh," said Sylvia, breaking out into a wild cry, that carried with it more conviction of agony than much weeping could have done. "I may be rude and hard, and I may ask strange questions, as if I cared for t' answers yo' may gi' me; an', in my heart o' hearts, I care for nought but to have father

back wi' us, as love him so dear. I can hardly tell what I say, much less why I say it. Mother is so patient, it puts me past mysel', for I could fight wi' t' very walls, I'm so mad wi' grieving. Sure, they'll let him come back wi' us to-morrow, when they hear from his own sel' why he did it?"

She looked eagerly at Hester for an answer to this last question, which she had put in a soft entreating tone, as if with Hester herself the decision rested. Hester shook her head. Sylvia came up to her and took her hands, almost fondling them.

"Yo' dunnot think they'll be hard wi' him when they hear all about it, done yo'? Why, York Castle's t' place they send a' t' thieves and robbers to, not honest men like feyther."

Hester put her hand on Sylvia's shoulder with a soft, caressing gesture.

"Philip will know," she said, using Philip's name as a kind of spell—it would have been so to her. "Come away to Philip," said she again, urging Sylvia, by her looks and manner, to prepare for the little journey. Sylvia moved away for this purpose, saying to herself,

"It's going to see feyther: he will tell me all."

Poor Mrs. Robson was collecting a few clothes for

her husband with an eager, trembling hand, so trembling that article after article fell to the floor, and it was Hester who picked them up; and at last, after many vain attempts by the grief-shaken woman, it was Hester who tied the bundle, and arranged the cloak, and fastened down the hood; Sylvia standing by, not unobservant, though apparently absorbed in her own thoughts.

At length, all was arranged, and the key given over to Kester. As they passed out into the storm, Sylvia said to Hester,

"Thou's a real good wench. Thou's fitter to be about mother than me. I'm but a cross-patch at best, an' now it's like as if I was no good to nobody."

Sylvia began to cry, but Hester had no time to attend to her, even had she the inclination; all her care was needed to help the hasty, tottering steps of the wife who was feebly speeding up the wet and slippery brow to her husband. All Bell thought of was that "he" was at the end of her toil. She hardly understood when she was to see him; her weary heart and brain had only received one idea—that each step she was now taking was leading her to him. Tired and exhausted with her quick walk up hill, battling all the way with wind and rain, she could hardly have held up another minute when

they reached the tax-cart in the lane, and Hester had almost to lift her on to the front seat by the driver. She covered and wrapped up the poor old woman, and afterwards placed herself in the straw at the back of the cart, packed up close by the shivering, weeping Sylvia. Neither of them spoke a word at first; but Hester's tender conscience smote her for her silence before they had reached Monkshaven. She wanted to say some kind word to Sylvia, and yet knew not how to begin. Somehow, without knowing why, or reasoning upon it, she hit upon Philip's message as the best comfort in her power to give. She had delivered it before, but it had been apparently little heeded.

"Philip bade me say it was business as kept him from fetching yo' hissel'—business wi' the lawyer, about—about yo'r father."

"What do they say?" said Sylvia, suddenly, lifting her bowed head, as though she would read her companion's face in the dim light.

"I dunnot know," said Hester, sadly. They were now jolting over the paved streets, and not a word could be spoken. They were now at Philip's door, which was opened to receive them even before they arrived, as if some one had been

watching and listening. The old servant, Phœbe, the fixture in the house, who had belonged to it and to the shop for the last twenty years, came out, holding a candle and sheltering it in her hand from the weather, while Philip helped the tottering steps of Mrs. Robson as she descended behind. As Hester had got in last, so she had now to be the first to move. Just as she was moving, Sylvia's cold little hand was laid on her arm.

"I am main and thankful to yo'. I ask yo'r pardon for speaking cross, but, indeed, my heart's a'most broken wi' fear about feyther."

The voice was so plaintive, so full of tears, that Hester could not but yearn towards the speaker. She bent over and kissed her cheek, and then clambered unaided down by the wheel on the dark side of the cart. Wistfully she longed for one word of thanks or recognition from Philip, in whose service she had performed this hard task; but he was otherwise occupied, and on casting a further glance back as she turned the corner of the street, she saw Philip lifting Sylvia carefully down in his arms from her footing on the top of the wheel, and then they all went into the light and the warmth, the door was shut, the lightened cart drove briskly away, and Hester, in rain, and

cold, and darkness, went homewards with her tired sad heart.

Philip had done all he could, since his return from lawyer Dawson's, to make his house bright and warm for the reception of his beloved. He had a strong apprehension of the probable fate of poor Daniel Robson; he had warm sympathy with the miserable distress of the wife and daughter; but still at the back of his mind his spirits danced as if this was to them a festal occasion. He had even taken unconscious pleasure in Phœbe's suspicious looks and tones, as he had hurried and superintended her in her operations. A fire blazed cheerily in the parlour, almost dazzling to the travellers brought in from the darkness and the rain; candles burned—two candles, much to Phœbe's discontent. Poor Bell Robson had to sit down almost as soon as she entered the room, so worn out was she with fatigue and excitement; yet she grudged every moment which separated her, as she thought, from her husband.

"I'm ready now," said she, standing up, and rather repulsing Sylvia's cares; "I'm ready now," said she, looking eagerly at Philip, as if for him to lead the way.

"It's not to-night," replied he, almost apologeti-

cally. "You can't see him to-night; it's to-morrow morning, before he goes to York; it was better for yo' to be down here in town ready; and beside I didn't know when I sent for ye that he was locked up for the night."

"Well-a-day, well-a-day," said Bell, rocking herself backwards and forwards, and trying to soothe herself with these words. Suddenly she said,

"But I've brought his comforter wi' me—his red woollen comforter as he's allays slept in this twelvemonth past; he'll get his rheumatiz again; oh, Philip, cannot I get it to him?"

"I'll send it by Phœbe," said Philip, who was busy making tea, hospitable and awkward.

"Cannot I take it mysel'?" repeated Bell. "I could make surer nor anybody else; they'd maybe not mind yon woman—Phœbe d'ye call her?"

"Nay, mother," said Sylvia, "thou's not fit to go."

"Shall I go?" asked Philip, hoping she would say "no," and be content with Phœbe, and leave him where he was.

"Oh, Philip, would yo'?" said Sylvia, turning round.

"Ay," said Bell, "if thou would take it they'd be minding yo'."

So there was nothing for it but for him to go, in the first flush of his delightful rites of hospitality.

"It's not far," said he, consoling himself rather than them. "I'll be back in ten minutes, the tea is maskit, and Phœbe will take yo'r wet things and dry 'em by t' kitchen fire; and here's the stairs," opening a door in the corner of the room, from which the stairs immediately ascended. "There's two rooms at the top; that to t' left is all made ready, t' other is mine," said he, reddening a little as he spoke. Bell was busy undoing her bundle with trembling fingers.

"Here," said she; "and oh, lad, here's a bit o' peppermint cake; he's main and fond on it, and I catched sight on it by good luck just t' last minute."

Philip was gone, and the excitement of Bell and Sylvia flagged once more, and sank into wondering despondency. Sylvia, however, roused herself enough to take off her mother's wet clothes, and she took them timidly into the kitchen and arranged them before Phœbe's fire.

Phœbe opened her lips once or twice to speak in remonstrance, and then with an effort gulped her words down; for her sympathy, like that of all the rest of the Monkshaven world, was in favour

of Daniel Robson; and his daughter might place her dripping cloak this night wherever she would, for Phœbe.

Sylvia found her mother still sitting on the chair next the door, where she had first placed herself on entering the room.

"I'll gi'e yo' some tea, mother," said she, struck with the shrunken look of Bell's face.

"No, no," said her mother. "It's not manners for t' help oursel's."

"I'm sure Philip would ha' wished yo' for to take it," said Sylvia, pouring out a cup.

Just then he returned, and something in his look, some dumb expression of delight at her occupation, made her blush and hesitate for an instant; but then she went on, and made a cup of tea ready, saying something a little incoherent all the time about her mother's need of it. After tea Bell Robson's weariness became so extreme, that Philip and Sylvia urged her to go to bed. She resisted a little, partly out of "manners," and partly because she kept fancying, poor woman, that somehow or other her husband might send for her. But about seven o'clock Sylvia persuaded her to come upstairs. Sylvia, too, bade Philip good-night, and his look followed the last wave of her dress as she dis-

appeared up the stairs; then leaning his chin on his hand, he gazed at vacancy and thought deeply—for how long he knew not, so intent was his mind on the chances of futurity.

He was aroused by Sylvia's coming downstairs into the sitting-room again. He started up.

"Mother is so shivery," said she. "May I go in there," indicating the kitchen, "and make her a drop of gruel?"

"Phœbe shall make it, not you," said Philip, eagerly preventing her, by going to the kitchen door and giving his orders. When he turned round again, Sylvia was standing over the fire, leaning her head against the stone mantel-piece for the comparative coolness. She did not speak at first, or take any notice of him. He watched her furtively, and saw that she was crying, the tears running down her cheeks, and she too much absorbed in her thoughts to wipe them away with her apron.

While he was turning over in his mind what he could best say to comfort her (his heart, like hers, being almost too full for words), she suddenly looked him full in the face, saying,

"Philip! won't they soon let him go? what can they do to him?" Her open lips trembled while awaiting his answer, the tears came up and filled her

eyes. It was just the question he had most dreaded; it led to the terror that possessed his own mind, but which he had hoped to keep out of hers. He hesitated. "Speak, lad!" said she, impatiently, with a little passionate gesture. "I can see thou knows!"

He had only made it worse by consideration; he rushed blindfold at a reply.

"He's ta'en up for felony."

"Felony," said she. "There thou're out; he's in for letting yon men out; thou may call it rioting if thou's a mind to set folks again' him, but it's too bad to cast such hard words at him as yon—felony," she repeated, in a half-offended tone.

"It's what the lawyers call it," said Philip, sadly; "it's no word o' mine."

"Lawyers is allays for making the worst o' things," said she, a little pacified, "but folks shouldn't allays believe them."

"It's lawyers as has to judge i' t' long run."

"Cannot the justices, Mr. Harter and them as is no lawyers, give him a sentence to-morrow, wi'out sending him to York?"

"No!" said Philip, shaking his head. He went to the kitchen door and asked if the gruel was not ready, so anxious was he to stop the conversation at this point; but Phœbe, who held her young

master in but little respect, scolded him for a stupid man, who thought, like all his sex, that gruel was to be made in a minute, whatever the fire was, and bade him come and make it for himself if he was in such a hurry.

He had to return discomforted to Sylvia, who meanwhile had arranged her thoughts ready to return to the charge.

"And say he's sent to York, and say he's tried theere, what's t' worst they can do again' him?" asked she, keeping down her agitation to look at Philip the more sharply. Her eyes never slackened their penetrating gaze at his countenance, until he replied, with the utmost unwillingness, and most apparent confusion,

"They may send him to Botany Bay."

He knew that he held back a worse contingency, and he was mortally afraid that she would perceive this reserve. But what he did say was so much beyond her utmost apprehension, which had only reached to various terms of imprisonment, that she did not imagine the dark shadow lurking behind. What he had said was too much for her. Her eyes dilated, her lips blanched, her pale cheeks grew yet paler. After a minute's look into his face, as if fascinated by some horror, she stumbled backwards into

the chair in the chimney corner, and covered her face with her hands, moaning out some inarticulate words.

Philip was on his knees by her, dumb from excess of sympathy, kissing her dress, all unfelt by her; he murmured half-words, he began passionate sentences that died away upon his lips, and she, she thought of nothing but her father, and was possessed and rapt out of herself by the dread of losing him to that fearful country which was almost like the grave to her, so all but impassable was the gulf. But Philip knew that it was possible that the separation impending might be that of the dark mysterious grave—that the gulf between the father and child might indeed be that which no living, breathing, warm human creature can ever cross.

"Sylvie, Sylvie!" said he,—and all their conversation had to be carried on in low tones and whispers for fear of the listening ears above,—"don't—don't, thou'rt rending my heart. Oh, Sylvie, hearken. There's not a thing I'll not do; there's not a penny I've got,—th' last drop of blood that's in me,—I'll give up my life for his."

"Life," said she, putting down her hands, and looking at him as if her looks could pierce his soul; "who talks o' touching his life? Thou're

going crazy, Philip, I think;" but she did not think so, although she would fain have believed it. In her keen agony she read his thoughts as though they were an open page; she sate there, upright and stony, the conviction creeping over her face like the grey shadow of death. No more tears, no more trembling, almost no more breathing. He could not bear to see her, and yet she held his eyes, and he feared to make the effort necessary to move or to turn away lest the shunning motion should carry conviction to her heart. Alas! conviction of the probable danger to her father's life was already there: it was that that was calming her down, tightening her muscles, bracing her nerves. In that hour she lost all her early youth.

"Then he may be hung," said she, low and solemnly, after a long pause. Philip turned away his face, and did not utter a word. Again deep silence, broken only by some homely sound in the kitchen. "Mother must not know on it," said Sylvia, in the same tone in which she had spoken before.

"It's t' worst as can happen to him," said Philip. "More likely he'll be transported: maybe he'll be brought in innocent after all."

"No," said Sylvia, heavily, as one without hope—as if she were reading some dreadful doom in the

tablets of the awful future. "They'll hang him. Oh, feyther! feyther!" she choked out, almost stuffing her apron into her mouth to deaden the sound, and catching at Philip's hand, and wringing it with convulsive force, till the pain that he loved was nearly more than he could bear. No words of his could touch such agony; but irrepressibly, and as he would have done it to a wounded child, he bent over her, and kissed her with a tender trembling kiss. She did not repulse it, probably she did not even perceive it.

At that moment Phœbe came in with the gruel. Philip saw her, and knew, in an instant, what the old woman's conclusion must needs be; but Sylvia had to be shaken by the now standing Philip, before she could be brought back to the least consciousness of the present time. She lifted up her white face to understand his words, then she rose up like one who slowly comes to the use of her limbs.

"I suppose I mun go," she said; "but I'd sooner face the dead. If she asks me, Philip, what mun I say?"

"She'll not ask yo,'" said he, "if yo' go about as common. She's niver asked yo' all this time, an' if she does, put her on to me. I'll keep it from her as long as I can; I'll manage better nor I've done wi'

thee, Sylvie," said he, with a sad faint smile, looking with fond penitence at her altered countenance.

"Thou mustn't blame thysel'," said Sylvia, seeing his regret. "I brought it on me mysel'; I thought I would ha' t' truth whativer came on it, and now I'm not strong enough to stand it, God help me!" she continued, piteously.

"Oh, Sylvie, let me help yo'! I cannot do what God can,—I'm not meaning that, but I can do next to Him of any man. I have loved yo' for years an' years, in a way it's terrible to think on, if my love can do nought now to comfort yo' in your sore distress."

"Cousin Philip," she replied, in the same measured tone in which she had always spoken since she had learnt the extent of her father's danger, and the slow stillness of her words was in harmony with the stony look of her face, "thou's a comfort to me, I couldn't bide my life without thee; but I cannot take in the thought o' love, it seems beside me quite; I can think on nought but them that is quick, and them that is dead."

CHAPTER XIII.

GLOOMY DAYS.

PHILIP had money in the Fosters' bank, not so much as it might have been if he had not had to pay for the furniture in his house. Much of this furniture was old, and had belonged to the brothers Foster, and they had let Philip have it at a very reasonable rate; but still the purchase of it had diminished the amount of his savings. But on the sum which he possessed he drew largely—he drew all—nay, he overdrew his account somewhat, to his former masters' dismay, although the kindness of their hearts overruled the harder arguments of their heads.

All was wanted to defend Daniel Robson at the approaching York assizes. His wife had handed over to Philip all the money or money's worth she could lay her hands upon. Daniel himself was not one to be much beforehand with the world; but to Bell's thrifty imagination the round golden guineas, tied up in the old stocking-foot against rent-day,

seemed a mint of money on which Philip might draw infinitely. As yet she did not comprehend the extent of her husband's danger. Sylvia went about like one in a dream, keeping back the hot tears that might interfere with the course of life she had prescribed for herself in that terrible hour when she first learnt all. Every penny of money either she or her mother could save went to Philip. Kester's hoard, too, was placed in Hepburn's hands at Sylvia's earnest entreaty; for Kester had no great opinion of Philip's judgment, and would rather have taken his money straight himself to Mr. Dawson, and begged him to use it for his master's behoof.

Indeed, if anything, the noiseless breach between Kester and Philip had widened of late. It was seed-time, and Philip, in his great anxiety for every possible interest that might affect Sylvia, and also as some distraction from his extreme anxiety about her father, had taken to study agriculture of an evening in some old books which he had borrowed—*The Farmer's Complete Guide*, and such-like; and from time to time he came down upon the practical dogged Kester with directions gathered from the theories in his books. Of course the two fell out, but without many words. Kester persevered in his old ways, making light of Philip and his books in manner and

action, till at length Philip withdrew from the contest. "Many a man may lead a horse to water, but there's few can make him drink," and Philip certainly was not one of those few. Kester, indeed, looked upon him with jealous eyes on many accounts. He had favoured Charley Kinraid as a lover of Sylvia's; and though he had no idea of the truth,—though he believed in the drowning of the specksioneer as much as any one,—yet the year which had elapsed since Kinraid's supposed death, was but a very short while to the middle-aged man, who forgot how slowly time passes with the young; and he could often have scolded Sylvia, if the poor girl had been a whit less heavy at heart than she was, for letting Philip come so much about her—come, though it was on her father's business. For the darkness of their common dread drew them together, occasionally to the comparative exclusion of Bell and Kester, which the latter perceived and resented. Kester even allowed himself to go so far as to wonder what Philip could want with all the money, which to him seemed unaccountable; and once or twice the ugly thought crossed his mind, that shops conducted by young men were often not so profitable as when guided by older heads, and that some of the coin poured into Philip's keeping might have another destination than the

defence of his master. Poor Philip! and he was spending all his own, and more than all his own money, and no one ever knew it, as he had bound down his friendly bankers to secrecy.

Once only Kester ventured to speak to Sylvia on the subject of Philip. She had followed her cousin to the field just in front of their house, just outside the porch, to ask him some question she dared not put in her mother's presence—(Bell, indeed, in her anxiety, usually absorbed all the questions when Philip came)—and stood, after Philip had bid her good-by, hardly thinking about him at all, but looking unconsciously after him as he ascended the brow; and at the top he had turned to take a last glance at the place his love inhabited, and, seeing her, he had waved his hat in gratified farewell. She, meanwhile, was roused from far other thoughts than of him, and of his now acknowledged love, by the motion against the sky, and was turning back into the house when she heard Kester's low hoarse call, and saw him standing at the shippen door.

"Come hither, wench," said he, indignantly; "is this a time for courtin'?"

"Courting!" said she, drawing up her head, and looking back at him with proud defiance.

"Ay, courtin'! what other mak' o' thing is 't when thou's gazin' after yon meddlesome chap, as if thou'd send thy eyes after him, and he making marlocks back at thee? It's what we ca'ed courtin' i' my young days anyhow. And it's noane a time for a wench to go courtin' when her feyther's i' prison," said he, with a consciousness as he uttered these last words that he was cruel and unjust and going too far, yet carried on to say them by his hot jealousy against Philip.

Sylvia continued looking at him without speaking: she was too much offended for expression.

"Thou may glower an' thou may look, lass," said he, "but a'd thought better on thee. It's like last week thy last sweetheart were drowned; but thou's not one to waste time i' rememberin' them as is gone—if, indeed, thou iver cared a button for yon Kinraid—if it wasn't a make-believe."

Her lips were contracted and drawn up, showing her small glittering teeth, which were scarcely apart as she breathed out—

"Thou thinks so, does thou, that I've forgetten *him?* Thou'd better have a care o' thy tongue."

Then, as if fearful that her self-command might give way, she turned into the house; and going through the kitchen like a blind person, she went up to

her now unused chamber, and threw herself, face downwards, flat on her bed, almost smothering herself.

Ever since Daniel's committal, the decay that had imperceptibly begun in his wife's bodily and mental strength during her illness of the previous winter, had been making quicker progress. She lost her reticence of speech, and often talked to herself. She had not so much forethought as of old; slight differences, it is true, but which, with some others of the same description, gave foundation for the homely expression which some now applied to Bell, "She 'll never be t' same woman again."

This afternoon she had cried herself to sleep in her chair after Philip's departure. She had not heard Sylvia's sweeping passage through the kitchen; but half an hour afterwards she was startled up by Kester's abrupt entry.

"Wheere's Sylvie?" asked he.

"I don't know," said Bell, looking scared, and as if she was ready to cry. "It's no news about him?" said she, standing up, and supporting herself on the stick she was now accustomed to use.

"Bless yo', no, dunnot be afeared, missus; it's only as a spoke hasty to t' wench, an' I want t' tell her as a'm sorry," said Kester, advancing into the kitchen, and looking round for Sylvia.

"Sylvie, Sylvie!" shouted he; "she mun be i' t' house."

Sylvia came slowly down the stairs, and stood before him. Her face was pale, her mouth set and determined; the light of her eyes veiled in gloom. Kester shrank from her look, and even more from her silence.

"A'm come to ax pardon," said he, after a little pause.

She was still silent.

"A'm noane above axing pardon, though a'm fifty and more, and thee's but a silly wench, as a've nursed i' my arms. A'll say before thy mother as a ought niver to ha' used them words, and as how a'm sorry for 't."

"I don't understand it all," said Bell, in a hurried and perplexed tone. "What has Kester been saying, my lass?" she added, turning to Sylvia.

Sylvia went a step or two nearer to her mother, and took hold of her hand as if to quieten her; then facing once more round, she said, deliberately, to Kester,—

"If thou wasn't Kester, I'd niver forgive thee. Niver," she added, with bitterness, as the words he had used recurred to her mind. "It's in me to hate thee now, for saying what thou did; but thou're

dear old Kester after all, and I can't help mysel', I mun needs forgive thee," and she went towards him. He took her little head between his horny hands and kissed it. She looked up with tears in her eyes, saying softly,

"Niver say things like them again. Niver speak on ——"

"A'll bite my tongue off first," he interrupted.

He kept his word.

In all Philip's comings and goings to and from Haytersbank Farm at this time, he never spoke again of his love. In look, words, manner, he was like a thoughtful, tender brother; nothing more. He could be nothing more in the presence of the great dread which loomed larger upon him after every conversation with the lawyer.

For Mr. Donkin had been right in his prognostication. Government took up the attack on the Rendezvous with a high and heavy hand. It was necessary to assert authority which had been of late too often braved. An example must be made, to strike dismay into those who opposed and defied the press-gang; and all the minor authorities who held their powers from Government were in a similar manner severe and relentless in the execution of their duty. So the attorney, who went over to

see the prisoner in York Castle, told Philip. He added that Daniel still retained his pride in his achievement, and could not be brought to understand the dangerous position in which he was placed; that when pressed and questioned as to circumstances that might possibly be used in his defence, he always wandered off to accounts of previous outrages committed by the press-gang, or to passionate abuse of the trick by which men had been lured from their homes on the night in question to assist in putting out an imaginary fire, and then seized and carried off. Some of this very natural indignation might possibly be expressed and interwoven into the counsel's speech for the defence. It was their only chance, since Simpson's evidence was conclusive as to the part Robson had taken; and indeed there was no use attempting to prove an alibi. But again, the worst was, that, in a recent trial at Bristol,—in late events at Hull,—the court and magistrates had almost behaved as though they were advocates against the prisoner; and the judge might so behave as to quench any counsel who might attempt to stir up the sympathies of the jury in any matter in which Government had a direct interest.

Such was the substance of what Philip heard, and heard repeatedly, during his many visits to

Mr. Dawson. And now the time of trial drew near; for the York assizes opened on March the twelfth; not much above three weeks since the offence was committed which took Daniel from his home and placed him in peril of death.

Philip was glad that the extremity of his danger never having been hinted to Bell, and travelling some twenty miles being a most unusual exertion at that time to persons of her class, the idea of going to see her husband at York had never suggested itself to Bell's mind. Her increasing feebleness made this seem a step only to be taken in case of the fatal extreme necessity; such was the conclusion that both Sylvia and he had come to; and it was the knowledge of this that made Sylvia strangle her own daily longing to see her father. Not but that her hopes were stronger than her fears. Philip never told her the causes for despondency; she was young, and she, like her father, could not understand how fearful sometimes is the necessity for prompt and severe punishment of rebellion against authority.

Philip was to be in York during the time of the assizes; and it was understood, almost without words, that if the terrible worst occurred, the wife and daughter were to come to York as soon as might

be. For this end Philip silently made all the necessary arrangements before leaving Monkshaven. The sympathy of all men was with him; it was too large an occasion for Coulson to be anything but magnanimous. He urged Philip to take all the time requisite; to leave all business cares to him. And as Philip went about pale and sad, there was another cheek that grew paler still, another eye that filled with quiet tears as his heaviness of heart became more and more apparent. The day for opening the assizes came on. Philip was in York Minster, watching the solemn antique procession in which the highest authority in the county accompanies the judges to the House of the Lord, to be there admonished as to the nature of their duties. As Philip listened to the sermon with a strained and beating heart, his hopes rose higher than his fears for the first time, and that evening he wrote his first letter to Sylvia.

"Dear Sylvia,

"It will be longer first than I thought for. Mr. Dawson says Tuesday in next week. But keep up your heart. I have been hearing the sermon to-day which is preached to the judges; and the clergyman said so much in it about mercy and forgiveness, I

think they cannot fail to be lenient this assize. I have seen uncle, who looks but thin, but is in good heart: only he will keep saying he would do it over again if he had the chance, which neither Mr. Dawson nor I think is wise in him, in especial as the gaoler is by and hears every word as is said. He was very fain of hearing all about home: and wants you to rear Daisy's calf, as he thinks she will prove a good one. He bade me give his best love to you and my aunt, and his kind duty to Kester.

"Sylvia, will you try and forget how I used to scold you about your writing and spelling, and just write me two or three lines. I think I would rather have them badly spelt than not, because then I shall be sure they are yours. And never mind about capitals; I was a fool to say such a deal about them, for a man does just as well without them. A letter from you would do a vast to keep me patient all these days till Tuesday. Direct—

"Mr. Philip Hepburn,
"Care of Mr. Fraser, Draper,
"Micklegate,
"York.

"My affectionate duty to my aunt.

"Your respectful cousin and servant,
"PHILIP HEPBURN.

"P.S. The sermon was grand. The text was Zechariah vii., 9, 'Execute true judgment and show mercy.' God grant it may have put mercy into the judge's heart as is to try my uncle."

Heavily the days passed over. On Sunday Bell and Sylvia went to church, with a strange, half-superstitious feeling, as if they could propitiate the Most High to order the events in their favour by paying Him the compliment of attending to duties in their time of sorrow which they had too often neglected in their prosperous days.

But He "who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust," took pity upon His children, and sent some of his blessed peace into their hearts, else they could scarce have endured the agony of suspense of those next hours. For as they came slowly and wearily home from church, Sylvia could no longer bear her secret, but told her mother of the peril in which Daniel stood. Cold as the March wind blew, they had not felt it, and had sate down on a hedge bank for Bell to rest. And then Sylvia spoke, trembling and sick for fear, yet utterly unable to keep silence any longer. Bell heaved up her hands, and let them fall down on her knees before she replied.

"The Lord is above us," said she, solemnly. "He has sent a fear o' this into my heart afore now. I niver breathed it to thee, my lass ——"

"And I niver spoke on it to thee, mother, because ——"

Sylvia choked with crying, and laid her head on her mother's lap, feeling that she was no longer the strong one, and the protector, but the protected. Bell went on, stroking her head,

"The Lord is like a tender nurse as weans a child to look on and to like what it loathed once. He has sent me dreams as has prepared me for this, if so be it comes to pass."

"Philip is hopeful," said Sylvia, raising her head and looking through her tears at her mother.

"Ay, he is. And I cannot tell, but I think it's not for nought as the Lord has ta'en away all fear o' death out o' my heart. I think He means as Daniel and me is to go hand-in-hand through the valley—like as we walked up to our wedding in Crosthwaite Church. I could never guide th' house without Dannel, and I should be feared he'd take a deal more nor is good for him without me."

"But me, mother, thou's forgetting me," moaned out Sylvia. "Oh, mother, mother, think on me!"

"Nay, my lass, I'm noane forgetting yo'. I'd a sore heart a' last winter a-thinking on thee, when that chap Kinraid were hanging about thee. I'll noane speak ill on the dead, but I were uneasy-like. But sin Philip and thee seem t' ha' made it up ——"

Sylvia shivered, and opened her mouth to speak, but did not say a word.

"And sin' the Lord has been comforting me, and talking to me many a time when thou's thought I were asleep, things has seemed to redd theirselves up, and if Daniel goes, I'm ready to follow. I could niver stand living to hear folks say he'd been hung; it seems so unnatural and shameful."

"But, mother, he won't!—he shan't be hung!" said Sylvia, springing to her feet. "Philip says he won't."

Bell shook her head. They walked on, Sylvia both disheartened and almost irritated at her mother's despondency. But before they went to bed at night Bell said things which seemed as though the morning's feelings had been but temporary, and as if she was referring every decision to the period of her husband's return. "When father comes home," seemed a sort of burden at the beginning or end

of every sentence, and this reliance on his certain coming back to them was almost as great a trial to Sylvia as the absence of all hope had been in the morning. But that instinct told her that her mother was becoming incapable of argument, she would have asked her why her views were so essentially changed in so few hours. This inability of reason in poor Bell made Sylvia feel very desolate.

Monday passed over—how, neither of them knew, for neither spoke of what was filling the thoughts of both. Before it was light on Tuesday morning, Bell was astir.

"It's very early, mother!" said weary, sleepy Sylvia, dreading returning consciousness.

"Ay, lass!" said Bell, in a brisk, cheerful tone; "but he'll, maybe, be home to-night, and I'se bound to have all things ready for him."

"Anyhow," said Sylvia, sitting up in bed, "he couldn't come home to-night."

"Tut, lass! thou doesn't know how quick a man comes home to wife and child. I'll be a' ready at any rate."

She hurried about in a way which Sylvia wondered to see; till at length she fancied that perhaps her mother did so to drive away thought. Every place

was cleaned; there was scarce time allowed for breakfast; till at last, long before mid-day, all the work was done, and the two sat down to their spinning-wheels. Sylvia's spirits sank lower and lower at each speech of her mother's, from whose mind all fear seemed to have disappeared, leaving only a strange restless kind of excitement.

"It's time for t' potatoes," said Bell, after her wool had snapped many a time from her uneven tread.

"Mother," said Sylvia, "it's but just gone ten!"

"Put 'em on," said Bell, without attending to the full meaning of her daughter's words. "It'll, maybe, hasten t' day on if we get dinner done betimes."

"But Kester is in t' Far Acre field, and he'll not be home till noon."

This seemed to settle matters for a while; but then Bell pushed her wheel away, and began searching for her hood and cloak. Sylvia found them for her, and then asked sadly—

"What does ta want 'em for, mother?"

"I'll go up t' brow and through t' field, and just have a look down t' lane."

"I'll go wi' thee," said Sylvia, feeling all the time

the uselessness of any looking for intelligence from York so early in the day. Very patiently did she wait by her mother's side during the long half-hour which Bell spent in gazing down the road for those who never came.

When they got home Sylvia put the potatoes on to boil; but when dinner was ready and the three were seated at the dresser, Bell pushed her plate away from her, saying it was so long after dinner time that she was past eating. Kester would have said something about its being only half-past twelve, but Sylvia gave him a look beseeching silence, and he went on with his dinner without a word, only brushing away the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand from time to time.

"A'll noane go far fra' home t' rest o' t' day," said he, in a whisper to Sylvia, as he went out.

"Will this day niver come to an end?" cried Bell, plaintively.

"Oh, mother! it'll come to an end some time, never fear. I've heered say—

"'Be the day weary or be the day long,
At length it ringeth to even-song.'"

"To even-song—to even-song," repeated Bell. "D'ye think now that even-song means death, Sylvie?"

"I cannot tell—I cannot bear it. Mother," said Sylvia, in despair; "I'll make some clap-bread: that's a heavy job, and will while away t' afternoon."

"Ay, do!" replied the mother. "He'll like it fresh—he'll like it fresh."

Murmuring and talking to herself, she fell into a doze, from which Sylvia was careful not to disturb her.

The days were now getting long, although as cold as ever; and at Haytersbank Farm the light lingered, as there was no near horizon to bring on early darkness. Sylvia had all ready for her mother's tea against she wakened; but she slept on and on the peaceful sleep of a child, and Sylvia did not care to waken her. Just after the sun had set, she saw Kester outside the window making signs to her to come out. She stole out on tip-toe by the back-kitchen, the door of which was standing open. She almost ran against Philip, who did not perceive her, as he was awaiting her coming the other way round the corner of the house, and who turned upon her a face whose import she read in an instant. "Philip!" was all she said, and then she fainted at his feet, coming down with a heavy bang on the round paving stones of the yard.

"Kester! Kester!" he cried, for she looked

like one dead, and with all his strength the wearied man could not lift her and carry her into the house.

With Kester's help she was borne into the back-kitchen, and Kester rushed to the pump for some cold water to throw over her.

While Philip, kneeling at her head, was partly supporting her in his arms, and heedless of any sight or sound, the shadow of some one fell upon him. He looked up and saw his aunt; the old dignified, sensible expression on her face, exactly like her former self, composed, strong, and calm.

"My lass," said she, sitting down by Philip, and gently taking her out of his arms into her own.

"Lass, bear up! we mun bear up, and be agait on our way to him, he'll be needing us now. Bear up, my lass! the Lord will give us strength. We mun go to him; ay, time's precious; thou mun cry thy cry at after!"

Sylvia opened her dim eyes, and heard her mother's voice; the ideas came slowly into her mind, and slowly she rose up, standing still, like one who has been stunned, to regain her strength; and then, taking hold of her mother's arm, she said, in a soft, strange voice—

"Let's go. I'm ready."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ORDEAL.

It was the afternoon of an April day in that same year, and the sky was blue above, with little sailing white clouds catching the pleasant sunlight. The earth in that northern country had scarcely yet put on her robe of green. The few trees grew near brooks running down from the moors and the higher ground. The air was full of pleasant sounds prophesying of the coming summer. The rush, and murmur, and tinkle of the hidden watercourses; the song of the lark poised high up in the sunny air; the bleat of the lambs calling to their mothers—everything inanimate was full of hope and gladness.

For the first time for a mournful month the front door of Haytersbank Farm was open; the warm spring air might enter, and displace the sad dark gloom, if it could. There was a newly-lighted fire in the unused grate; and Kester was in the kitchen, with his clogs off his feet, so as not to dirty the

spotless floor, stirring here and there, and trying in his awkward way to make things look home-like and cheerful. He had brought in some wild daffodils which he had been to seek in the dawn, and he placed them in a jug on the dresser. Dolly Reid, the woman who had come to help Sylvia during her mother's illness a year ago, was attending to something in the back-kitchen, making a noise among the milk-cans, and singing a ballad to herself as she worked; yet every now and then she checked herself in her singing, as if a sudden recollection came upon her that this was neither the time nor the place for songs. Once or twice she took up the funeral psalm which is sung by the bearers of the body in that country—

"Our God, our help in ages past."

But it was of no use: the pleasant April weather out of doors, and perhaps the natural spring in the body, disposed her nature to cheerfulness, and insensibly she returned to her old ditty.

Kester was turning over many things in his rude honest mind as he stood there, giving his finishing touches every now and then to the aspect of the house-place, in preparation for the return of the widow and daughter of his old master.

It was a month and more since they had left home;

more than a fortnight since Kester, with three halfpence in his pocket, had set out after his day's work to go to York—to walk all night long, and to wish Daniel Robson his last farewell.

Daniel had tried to keep up, and had brought out one or two familiar, thread-bare, well-worn jokes, such as he had made Kester chuckle over many a time and oft, when the two had been together afield or in the shippen at the home which he should never more see. But no "Old Grouse in the gun-room" could make Kester smile, or do anything except groan in but a heart-broken sort of fashion, and presently the talk had become more suitable to the occasion, Daniel being up to the last the more composed of the two; for Kester, when turned out of the condemned cell, fairly broke down into the heavy sobbing he had never thought to sob again on earth. He had left Bell and Sylvia in their lodging at York, under Philip's care; he dared not go to see them; he could not trust himself; he had sent them his duty, and bade Philip tell Sylvia that the game-hen had brought out fifteen chickens at a hatch.

Yet although Kester sent this message through Philip, although he saw and recognized all that Philip was doing in their behalf,—in the behalf of Daniel Robson, the condemned felon, his honoured

master, he liked Hepburn not a whit better than he had done before all this sorrow had come upon them.

Philip had, perhaps, shown a want of tact in his conduct to Kester. Acute with passionate keenness in one direction, he had a sort of dull straightforwardness in all others. For instance, he had returned Kester the money which the latter had so gladly advanced towards the expenses incurred in defending Daniel. Now the money which Philip gave him back was part of an advance which Foster Brothers had made on Philip's own account. Philip had thought that it was hard on Kester to lose his savings in a hopeless cause, and had made a point of repaying the old man; but Kester would far rather have felt that the earnings of the sweat of his brow had gone in the attempt to save his master's life than have had twice ten times as many golden guineas.

Moreover, it seemed to take his action in lending his hoard out of the sphere of love, and make it but a leaden common loan, when it was Philip who brought him the sum, not Sylvia, into whose hands he had given it.

With these feelings Kester felt his heart shut up as he saw the long-watched-for two coming down

the little path with a third person; with Philip holding up the failing steps of poor Bell Robson, as, loaded with her heavy mourning, and feeble from the illness which had detained her in York ever since the day of her husband's execution, she came faltering back to her desolate home. Sylvia was also occupied in attending to her mother; once or twice, when they paused a little, she and Philip spoke, in the familiar way in which there is no coyness nor reserve. Kester caught up his clogs, and went quickly out through the back-kitchen into the farm-yard, not staying to greet them, as he had meant to do; and yet it was dull-sighted of him not to have perceived that whatever might be the relations between Philip and Sylvia, he was sure to have accompanied them home; for, alas! he was the only male protector of their blood remaining in the world. Poor Kester, who would fain have taken that office upon himself, chose to esteem himself cast off, and went heavily about the farm-yard, knowing that he ought to go in and bid such poor welcome as he had to offer, yet feeling too much to like to show himself before Philip.

It was long, too, before any one had leisure to come and seek him. Bell's mind had flashed up for a time, till the fatal day, only to be reduced by her

subsequent illness into complete and hopeless childishness. It was all Philip and Sylvia could do to manage her in the first excitement of returning home; her restless inquiry for him who would never more be present in the familiar scene, her feverish weariness and uneasiness, all required tender soothing and most patient endurance of her refusals to be satisfied with what they said or did.

At length she took some food, and, refreshed by it, and warmed by the fire, she sank asleep in her chair. Then Philip would fain have spoken with Sylvia before the hour came at which he must return to Monkshaven, but she eluded him, and went in search of Kester, whose presence she had missed.

She had guessed some of the causes which kept him from greeting them on their first return. But it was not as if she had shaped these causes into the definite form of words. It is astonishing to look back and find how differently constituted were the minds of most people fifty or sixty years ago; they felt, they understood, without going through reasoning or analytic processes, and if this was the case among the more educated people, of course it was still more so in the class to which Sylvia belonged. She knew by some sort of intuition that if Philip

accompanied them home (as, indeed, under the circumstances, was so natural as to be almost unavoidable) the old servant and friend of the family would absent himself; and so she slipped away at the first possible moment to go in search of him. There he was in the farm-yard, leaning over the gate that opened into the home-field, apparently watching the poultry that scratched and pecked at the new-springing grass with the utmost relish. A little farther off were the ewes with their new-dropped lambs, beyond that the great old thorn-tree with its round fresh clusters of buds, again beyond that there was a glimpse of the vast sunny rippling sea; but Sylvia knew well that Kester was looking at none of these things. She went up to him and touched his arm. He started from his reverie, and turned round upon her with his dim eyes full of unshed tears. When he saw her black dress, her deep mourning, he had hard work to keep from breaking out, but by dint of a good brush of his eyes with the back of his hand, and a moment's pause, he could look at her again with tolerable calmness.

"Why, Kester: why didst niver come to speak to us?" said Sylvia, finding it necessary to be cheerful if she could.

"A dun know; niver ax me. A say, they'n

gi'en Dick Simpson" (whose evidence had been all material against poor Daniel Robson at the trial) "a' t' rotten eggs and fou' things they could o' Saturday, they did," continued he, in a tone of satisfaction; "ay, and they niver stopped t' see whether t' eggs were rotten or fresh when their blood was up—nor whether stones was hard or soft," he added, in a lower tone, and chuckling a little.

Sylvia was silent. He looked at her now, chuckling still. Her face was white, her lips tightened, her eyes a-flame. She drew a long breath.

"I wish I'd been theere! I wish I could do him an ill turn," sighed she, with some kind of expression on her face that made Kester quail a little.

"Nay, lass! he'll get it fra' others. Niver fret thysel' about sich rubbish. A'n done ill to speak on him."

"No! thou hasn't. Them as was friends o' father's I'll love for iver and iver; them as helped for t' hang him" (she shuddered from head to foot—a sharp irrepressible shudder!) "I'll niver forgive—niver!"

"Niver's a long word," said Kester, musingly. "A could horse-whip him, or cast stones at him, or duck him mysel'; but, lass! niver's a long word!"

"Well! niver heed if it is—it's me as said it, and

I'm turned savage late days. Come in, Kester, and see poor mother."

"A cannot," said he, turning his wrinkled puckered face away, that she might not see the twitchings of emotion on it. "There's kine to be fetched up, and what not, and he's theere, isn't he, Sylvie?" facing round upon her with inquisitiveness. Under his peering eyes she reddened a little.

"Yes, if it's Philip thou means; he's been all we've had to look to sin'." Again the shudder.

"Well, now he'll be seein' after his shop, a reckon?"

Sylvia was calling to the old mare nibbling tufts of early-springing grass here and there, and half-unconsciously coaxing the creature to come up to the gate to be stroked. But she heard Kester's words well enough, and so he saw, although she made this excuse not to reply. But Kester was not to be put off.

"Folks is talkin' about thee and him; thou'll ha' to mind lest thee and him gets yo'r names coupled together."

"It's right down cruel on folks then," said she, crimsoning from some emotion. "As if any man as was a man wouldn't do all he could for two lone women at such a time—and he a cousin, too! Tell

me who said so," continued she, firing round at Kester, "and I'll niver forgive 'em—that's all."

"Hoots!" said Kester, a little conscious that he himself was the principal representative of that name of multitude "folk." "Here's a pretty lass; she's got 'A'll niver forgi'e' at her tongue's end wi' a vengeance."

Sylvia was a little confused.

"Oh, Kester, man," said she, "my heart is sore again' every one, for feyther's sake."

And at length the natural relief of plentiful tears came; and Kester, with instinctive wisdom, let her weep undisturbed; indeed, he cried not a little himself. They were interrupted by Philip's voice from the back-door.

"Sylvie, your mother's awake, and wants you!"

"Come, Kester, come," and taking hold of him she drew him with her into the house.

Bell rose as they came in, holding by the arms of the chair. At first she received Kester as though he had been a stranger.

"I'm glad to see yo', sir; t' master's out, but he'll be in afore long. It'll be about t' lambs yo're come, mebbe?"

"Mother!" said Sylvia, "dunnot yo' see? it's Kester,—Kester, wi' his Sunday clothes on."

"Kester! ay, sure it is; my eyes have getten so sore and dim of late; just as if I'd been greeting. I'm sure, lad, I'm glad to see thee! it's a long time I've been away, but it were not pleasure-seeking as took me, it were business o' some mak'—tell him, Sylvie, what it were, for my head's clean gone; I only know I wouldn't ha' left home if I could ha' helped it; for I think I should ha' kept my health better if I'd bided at home wi' my master. I wonder as he's not comed in for t' bid me welcome? Is he far afield, think ye, Kester?"

Kester looked at Sylvia, mutely imploring her to help him out in the dilemma of answering, but she was doing all she could to help crying. Philip came to the rescue.

"Aunt," said he, "the clock has stopped; can you tell me where t' find t' key, and I'll wind it up."

"T' key," said she, hurriedly, "t' key, it's behind th' big Bible on yon shelf. But I'd raythe thou wouldn't touch it, lad; it's t' master's work, and he distrusts folk meddling wi' it."

Day after day there was this constant reference to her dead husband. In one sense it was a blessing; all the circumstances attendant on his sad and untimely end were swept out of her mind along with the recollection of the fact itself. She referred to him

as absent, and had always some plausible way of accounting for it, which satisfied her own mind; and accordingly they fell into the habit of humouring her, and speaking of him as gone to Monkshaven, or afield, or wearied out, and taking a nap upstairs, as her fancy led her to believe for the moment. But this forgetfulness, though happy for herself, was terrible for her child. It was a constant renewing of Sylvia's grief, while her mother could give her no sympathy, no help, or strength in any circumstances that arose out of this grief. She was driven more and more upon Philip; his advice and his affection became daily more necessary to her.

Kester saw what would be the end of all this more clearly than Sylvia did herself; and, impotent to hinder what he feared and disliked, he grew more and more surly every day. Yet he tried to labour hard and well for the interests of the family, as if they were bound up in his good management of the cattle and land. He was out and about by the earliest dawn, working all day long with might and main. He bought himself a pair of new spectacles, which might, he fancied, enable him to read the *Farmer's Complete Guide*, his dead master's *vade mecum*. But he had never learnt more than his capital letters, and had forgotten many of them; so

the spectacles did him but little good. Then he would take the book to Sylvia, and ask her to read to him the instructions he needed; instructions, be it noted, that he would formerly have despised as mere book-learning; but his present sense of responsibility had made him humble.

Sylvia would find the place with all deliberation: and putting her finger under the line to keep the exact place of the word she was reading, she would strive in good earnest to read out the directions given; but when every fourth word had to be spelt, it was rather hopeless work, especially as all these words were unintelligible to the open-mouthed listener, however intent he might be. He had generally to fall back on his own experience; and, guided by that, things were not doing badly in his estimation, when one day Sylvia said to him, as they were in the hay-field, heaping up the hay into cocks with Dolly Reid's assistance—

"Kester—I didn't tell thee—there were a letter from Measter Hall, Lord Malton's steward, that came last night and that Philip read me."

She stopped for a moment.

"Ay, lass! Philip read it thee, and whatten might it say?"

"Only that he had an offer for Haytersbank Farm,

and would set mother free to go as soon as t' crops was off t' ground."

She sighed a little as she said this.

"'Only!' sayst ta? Whatten business has he for to go an' offer to let t' farm afore iver he were told as ye' wished to leave it?" observed Kester, in high dudgeon.

"Oh!" replied Sylvia, throwing down her rake, as if weary of life. "What could we do' wi' t' farm and land? If it were all dairy I might ha' done, but wi' so much on it arable."

"And if 'tis arable is not I allays to t' fore?"

"Oh, man, dunnot find fault wi' me! I'm just fain to lie down and die, if it were not for mother."

"Ay! thy mother will be sore unsettled if thou's for quitting Haytersbank," said merciless Kester.

"I cannot help it! I cannot help it! What can I do? It would take two pair o' men's hands to keep t' land up as Measter Hall likes it; and beside—"

"Beside what?" said Kester, looking up at her with his sudden odd look, one eye shut, the other open; there she stood, her two hands clasped tight together, her eyes filling with tears, her face pale and sad. "Beside what?" he asked again sharply.

"T' answer's sent to Measter Hall—Philip wrote it last night; so there's no use planning and fretting, it were done for t' best, and mun be done." She stooped and picked up her rake, and began tossing the hay with energy, the tears streaming down her cheeks unheeded. It was Kester's turn to throw down his rake. She took no notice, he did not feel sure that she had observed his action. He began to walk towards the field gate; this movement did catch her eye, for in a minute her hand was on his arm, and she was stooping forward to look into his face. It was working and twitching with emotion. "Kester! oh, man! speak out, but dunnot leave me a this-ns. What could I ha' done? Mother is gone dateless wi' sorrow, and I am but a young lass, i' years I mean; for I'm old enough wi' weeping."

"I'd ha' put up for t' farm mysel', sooner than had thee turned out," said Kester, in a low voice; then working himself up into a passion, as a new suspicion crossed his mind, he added,

"An' what for didn't yo' tell me on t' letter? Yo' were in a mighty hurry to settle it a', and get rid on t' oud place."

"Measter Hall had sent a notice to quit on Midsummer day; but Philip had answered it hisself.

Thou knows I'm not good at reading writing, 'special when a letter's full o' long words, and Philip had ta'en it in hand to answer."

"Wi'out asking thee?"

Sylvia went on without minding the interruption.

"And Measter Hall makes a good offer, for t' man as is going to come in will take t' stock and a' t' implements; and if mother—if we—if I—like, th' furniture and a'——"

"Furniture!" said Kester, in grim surprise. "What's to come o' t' missus and thee, that yo'll not need a bed to lie on, or a pot to boil yo'r vittle in?"

Sylvia reddened, but kept silence.

"Cannot yo' speak?"

"Oh, Kester, I didn't think thou'd turn again' me, and me so friendless. It's as if I'd been doin' something wrong, and I have so striven to act as is best; there's mother as well as me to be thought on."

"Cannot yo' answer a question?" said Kester, once more. "Whatten's up that t' missus and yo'll not need bed and table, pots and pans?"

"I think I'm going to marry Philip," said Sylvia, in so low a tone, that if Kester had not suspected what her answer was to be he could not have understood it.

After a moment's pause he recommenced his walk towards the field gate. But she went after him and held him tight by the arm, speaking rapidly.

"Kester, what could I do? What can I do? He's my cousin, and mother knows him, and likes him; and he's been so good to us in a' this time o' trouble and heavy grief, and he'll keep mother in comfort all t' rest of her days."

"Ay, and thee in comfort. There's a deal in a well-filled purse in a wench's eyes, or one would ha' thought it weren't so easy forgettin' yon lad as loved thee as t' apple on his eye."

"Kester, Kester," she cried, "I've niver forgetten Charlie; I think on him, I see him ivery night lying drowned at t' bottom o' th' sea. Forgetten him! Man! it's easy talking!" She was like a wild creature that sees its young, but is unable to reach it without a deadly spring, and yet is preparing to take that fatal leap. Kester himself was almost startled, and yet it was as if he must go on torturing her.

"An' who telled thee so sure and certain as he were drowned? He might ha' been carried off by t' press-gang as well as other men."

"Oh! if I were but dead that I might know all!" cried she, flinging herself down on the hay.

Kester kept silence. Then she sprang up again, and looking with eager wistfulness into his face, she said,

"Tell me t' chances. Tell me quick! Philip's very good, and kind, and he says he shall die if I will not marry him, and there's no home for mother and me,—no home for her, for as for me I dunnot care what becomes on me; but if Charlie's alive I cannot marry Philip—no, not if he dies for want o' me—and as for mother, poor mother, Kester, it's an awful strait; only first tell me if there's a chance, just one in a thousand, only one in a hundred thousand, as Charlie were ta'en by t' gang?" She was breathless by this time, what with her hurried words, and what with the beating of her heart. Kester took time to answer. He had spoken before too hastily, this time he weighed his words.

"Kinraid went away from this here place t' join his ship. An' he niver joined it no more; an' t' captain an' all his friends at Newcassel as iver were, made search for him, on board t' king's ships. That's more nor fifteen month ago, an' nought has iver been heerd on him by any man. That's what's to be said on one side o' t' matter. Then on t' other there's this as is known. His hat were cast up by t' sea wi' a ribbon in it, as there's reason

t' think as he'd not ha' parted wi' so quick if he'd had his own will.

"But yo' said as he might ha' been carried off by t' gang—yo' did, Kester, tho' now yo're a' for t'other side."

"My lass, a'd fain have him alive, an' a dunnot fancy Philip for thy husband; but it's a serious judgment as thou's put me on, an' a'm trying it fair. There's allays one chance i' a thousand as he's alive, for no man iver saw him dead. But t' gang were noane about Monkshaven then: there were niver a tender on t' coast nearer than Shields, an' those theere were searched."

He did not say any more, but turned back into the field, and took up his hay-making again.

Sylvia stood quite still, thinking, and wistfully longing for some kind of certainty.

Kester came up to her.

"Sylvie, thou knows Philip paid me back my money, and it were eight pound fifteen and threepence; and t' hay and stock 'll sell for summat above t' rent; and a've a sister as is a decent widow-woman, tho' but badly off, livin' at Dale End; and if thee and thy mother 'll go live wi' her, a'll give thee well on to all a can earn, and it'll be a matter o' five shilling a week. But dunnot

go and marry a man as thou's noane taken wi', and another as is most like for t' be dead, but who, mebbe, is alive, havin' a pull on thy heart."

Sylvia began to cry as if her heart was broken. She had promised herself more fully to Philip the night before than she had told Kester; and, with some pains and much patience, her cousin, her lover, alas! her future husband, had made the fact clear to the bewildered mind of her poor mother, who had all day long shown that her mind and heart were full of the subject, and that the contemplation of it was giving her as much peace as she could ever know. And now Kester's words came to call up echoes in the poor girl's heart. Just as she was in this miserable state, wishing that the grave lay open before her, and that she could lie down, and be covered up by the soft green turf from all the bitter sorrows and carking cares and weary bewilderments of this life; wishing that her father was alive, that Charlie was once more here; that she had not repeated the solemn words by which she had promised herself to Philip only the very evening before, she heard a soft, low whistle, and, looking round unconsciously, there was her lover and affianced husband, leaning on the gate, and gazing into the field with passionate eyes, devouring the fair face and figure of her, his future wife.

"Oh, Kester," said she once more, "what mun I do? I'm pledged to him as strong as words can make it, and mother blessed us both wi' more sense than she's had for weeks. Kester, man, speak! Shall I go and break it all off? say."

"Nay, it's noane for me t' say; m'appen thou's gone too far. Them above only knows what is best."

Again that long, cooing whistle. "Sylvie!"

"He's been very kind to us all," said Sylvia, laying her rake down with slow care, "and I'll try t' make him happy."

CHAPTER XV.

WEDDING RAIMENT.

PHILIP and Sylvia were engaged. It was not so happy a state of things as Philip had imagined. He had already found that out, although it was not twenty-four hours since Sylvia had promised to be his. He could not have defined why he was dissatisfied; if he had been compelled to account for his feeling he would probably have alleged as a reason that Sylvia's manner was so unchanged by her new position towards him. She was quiet and gentle; but no shyer, no brighter, no coyer, no happier than she had been for months before. When she joined him at the field-gate, his heart was beating fast, his eyes were beaming out love at her approach. She neither blushed nor smiled, but seemed absorbed in thought of some kind. But she resisted his silent effort to draw her away from the path leading to the house, and turned her face steadily homewards. He murmured soft words, which she scarcely heard. Right in their way was the stone trough for the

fresh bubbling water, that issuing from a roadside spring, served for all the household purposes of Haytersbank Farm. By it were the milk-cans, glittering and clean. Sylvia knew she should have to stop for these, and carry them back home in readiness for the evening's milking; and at this time, during this action, she resolved to say what was on her mind.

They were there. Sylvia spoke.

"Philip, Kester has been saying as how it might ha' been ——"

"Well!" said Philip.

Sylvia sate down on the edge of the trough, and dipped her hot little hand in the water. Then she went on quickly, and lifting her beautiful eyes to Philip's face, with a look of inquiry—"He thinks as Charley Kinraid may ha' been took by t' press-gang."

It was the first time she had named the name of her former lover to her present one since the day, long ago now, when they had quarrelled about him; and the rosy colour flushed her all over; but her sweet, trustful eyes never flinched from their steady, unconscious gaze.

Philip's heart stopped beating; literally, as if he had come to a sudden precipice, while he had thought

himself securely walking on sunny greensward. He went purple all over from dismay; he dared not take his eyes away from that sad earnest look of hers, but he was thankful that a mist came before them and drew a veil before his brain. He heard his own voice saying words he did not seem to have framed in his own mind.

"Kester's a d——d fool," he growled.

"He says there's mebbe but one chance i' a hundred," said Sylvia, pleading, as it were, for Kester; "but oh! Philip, think yo' there's just that one chance?"

"Ay, there's a chance, sure enough," said Philip, in a kind of fierce despair that made him reckless what he said or did. "There's a chance, I suppose, for iverything i' life as we have not seen with our own eyes as it may not ha' happened. Kester may say next as there's a chance as your father is not dead, because we none on us saw him ——"

"Hung," he was going to have said, but a touch of humanity came back into his stony heart. Sylvia sent up a little sharp cry at his words. He longed at the sound to take her in his arms and hush her up, as a mother hushes her weeping child. But the very longing, having to be repressed, only made him more beside himself, with guilt, anxiety, and

rage. They were quite still now. Sylvia looking sadly down into the bubbling, merry, flowing water; Philip glaring at her, wishing that the next word were spoken, though it might stab him to the heart. But she did not speak.

At length, unable to bear it any longer, he said, "Thou sets a deal o' store on that man, Sylvie."

If "that man" had been there at the moment, Philip would have grappled with him, and not let go his hold till one or the other were dead. Sylvia caught some of the passionate meaning of the gloomy miserable tone of Philip's voice as he said these words. She looked up at him.

"I thought yo' knowed that I cared a deal for him."

There was something so pleading and innocent in her pale troubled face, so pathetic in her tone, that Philip's anger, which had been excited against her, as well as against all the rest of the world, melted away into love; and once more he felt that have her for his own he must, at any cost. He sate down by her, and spoke to her in quite a different manner to that which he had used before with a ready tact and art which some strange instinct or tempter "close at his ear" supplied.

"Yes, darling, I knew yo' cared for him. I'll

not say ill of him that is—dead—ay, dead and drowned—whativer Kester may say—before now; but if I chose I could tell tales."

"No! tell no tales; I'll not hear them," said she, wrenching herself out of Philip's clasping arm. "They may misca' him for iver, and I'll not believe 'em."

"I'll niver miscall one who is dead," said Philip; each new unconscious sign of the strength of Sylvia's love for her former lover only making him the more anxious to convince her that he was dead, only rendering him more keen at deceiving his own conscience by repeating to it the lie that long ere this Kinraid was in all probability dead—killed by either the chances of war or tempestuous sea—that, even if not, he was as good as dead to her; so that the word "dead" might be used in all honest certainty, as in one of its meanings Kinraid was dead for sure.

"Think yo' that if he were not dead he wouldn't ha' written ere this to some one of his kin, if not to thee? Yet none of his folk Newcassel-way but believe him dead."

"So Kester says," sighed Sylvia.

Philip took heart. He put his arm softly round her again, and murmured—

"My lassie, try not to think on them as is gone, as is dead, but t' think a bit more on him as loves yo' wi' heart and soul and might, and has done iver sin' he first set eyes on yo'. Oh, Sylvie, my love for thee is just terrible."

At this moment Dolly Reid was seen at the back-door of the farmhouse, and catching sight of Sylvia, she called out—

"Sylvia, thy mother is axing for thee, and I cannot make her mind easy."

In a moment Sylvia had sprung up from her seat and was running in to soothe and comfort her mother's troubled fancies.

Philip sate on by the well-side, his face buried in his two hands. Presently he lifted himself up, drank some water eagerly out of his hollowed palm, sighed and shook himself, and followed his cousin into the house. Sometimes he came unexpectedly to the limits of his influence over her. In general she obeyed his expressed wishes with gentle indifference, as if she had no preferences of her own; once or twice he found that she was doing what he desired out of the spirit of obedience, which, as her mother's daughter, she believed to be her duty towards her affianced husband. And this last motive for action depressed her lover more than anything.

He wanted the old Sylvia back again; captious, capricious, wilful, haughty, merry, charming. Alas! that Sylvia was gone for ever.

But once especially his power, arising from whatever cause, was stopped entirely short—was utterly of no avail.

It was on the occasion of Dick Simpson's mortal illness. Sylvia and her mother kept aloof from every one. They had never been intimate with any family but the Corneys, and even this friendship had considerably cooled since Molly's marriage, and most especially since Kinraid's supposed death, when Bessy Corney and Sylvia had been, as it were, rival mourners. But many people, both in Monkshaven and the country round about, held the Robson family in great respect, although Mrs. Robson herself was accounted "high" and "distant;" and poor little Sylvia, in her heyday of beautiful youth and high spirits, had been spoken of as "a bit flighty," and "a set-up lassie." Still, when their great sorrow fell upon them, there were plenty of friends to sympathize deeply with them; and, as Daniel had suffered in a popular cause, there were even more who, scarcely knowing them personally, were ready to give them all the marks of respect and friendly feeling in their power. But neither Bell nor Sylvia

were aware of this. The former had lost all perception of what was not immediately before her; the latter shrank from all encounters of any kind with a sore heart, and sensitive avoidance of everything that could make her a subject of remark. So the poor afflicted people at Haytersbank knew little of Monkshaven news. What little did come to their ears came through Dolly Reid, when she returned from selling the farm produce of the week; and often, indeed, even then she found Sylvia too much absorbed in other cares or thoughts to listen to her gossip. So no one had ever named that Simpson was supposed to be dying till Philip began on the subject one evening. Sylvia's face suddenly flashed into glow and life.

"He's dying, is he? t' earth is well rid on such a fellow!"

"Eh, Sylvie, that's a hard speech o' thine!" said Philip; "it gives me but poor heart to ask a favour of thee!"

"If it's aught about Simpson," replied she, and then she interrupted herself: "But say on; it were ill-mannered in me for t' interrupt yo'."

"Thou would be sorry to see him, I think, Sylvie. He cannot get over the way, t' folk met him, and pelted him when he came back fra' York,—

and he's weak and faint, and beside himself at times; and he'll lie a-dreaming, and a-fancying they're all at him again, hooting, and yelling, and pelting him."

"I'm glad on 't," said Sylvia; "it's t' best news I've heered for many a day,—he, to turn again' feyther, who gave him money for t' get a lodging that night, when he'd no place to go to. It were his evidence as hung feyther; and he's rightly punished for it now."

"For a' that,—and he's done a vast o' wrong beside, he's dying now, Sylvie!"

"Well! let him die—it's t' best thing he could do!"

"But he's lying i' such dree poverty,—and niver a friend to go near him,—niver a person to speak a kind word t' him."

"It seems as yo've been speaking wi' him, at any rate," said Sylvia, turning round on Philip.

"Ay. He sent for me by Nell Manning, th' old beggar-woman, who sometimes goes in and makes his bed for him, poor wretch,—he's lying in t' ruins of th' cowhouse of th' Mariners' Arms, Sylvie."

"Well!" said she, in the same hard dry tone.

"And I went and fetched th' parish doctor, for I thought he'd ha' died before my face,—he was so

wan, and ashen-grey, so thin, too, his eyes seem pushed out of his bony face."

"That last time—feyther's eyes were starting, wild-like, and as if he couldn't meet ours, or bear the sight on our weeping."

It was a bad look-out for Philip's purpose; but after a pause he went bravely on.

"He's a poor dying creature, anyhow. T' dóctor said so, and told him he hadn't many hours, let alone days, to live."

"And he'd shrink fra' dying wi' a' his sins on his head?" said Sylvia, almost exultingly.

Philip shook his head. "He said this world had been too strong for him; and men too hard upon him,—he could niver do any good here, and he thought he should, maybe, find folks i' t' next place more merciful."

"He'll meet feyther theere," said Sylvia, still hard and bitter.

"He's a poor ignorant creature, and doesn't seem to know rightly who he's like to meet; only he seems glad to get away fra' Monkshaven folks; he were really hurt, I am afeared, that night, Sylvie,—and he speaks as if he'd had hard times of it ever since he were a child,—and he talks as if he were really grieved for t' part t' lawyers made him take at

th' trial,—they made him speak, against his will, he says."

"Couldn't he ha' bitten his tongue out?" asked Sylvia. "It's fine talking o' sorrow when the thing is done!"

"Well, anyhow he's sorry now; and he's not long for to live. And, Sylvie, he bid me ask thee, if, for the sake of all that is dear to thee both here, and i' th' world to come, thou'd go wi' me, and just say to him that thou forgives him his part that day."

"He sent thee on that errand, did he? And thou could come and ask me? I've a mind to break it off for iver wi' thee, Philip." She kept gasping, as if she could not say any more. Philip watched and waited till her breath came, his own half choked.

"Thee and me was niver meant to go together. It's not in me to forgive,—I sometimes think it's not in me to forget. I wonder, Philip, if thy feyther had done a kind deed—and a right deed—and a merciful deed—and some one as he'd been good to, even i' t' midst of his just anger, had gone and let on about him to th' judge, as was trying to hang him,—and had getten him hanged,—hanged dead, so that his wife were a widow, and his child fatherless for ivermore,—I wonder if thy veins would run milk and water, so that thou could go and make friends,

and speak soft wi' him as had caused thy feyther's death?"

"It's said in t' Bible, Sylvie, that we're to forgive."

"Ay, there's some things as I know I niver forgive; and there's others as I can't—and I won't, either."

"But, Sylvie, yo' pray to be forgiven your trespasses, as you forgive them as trespass against you."

"Well, if I'm to be taken at my word, I'll noane pray at all, that's all. It's well enough for them as has but little to forgive to use them words; and I don't reckon it's kind, or pretty-behaved in yo', Philip, to bring up Scripture again me. Thou may go about thy business."

"Thou'rt vexed with me, Sylvie; and I'm not meaning but that it would go hard with thee to forgive him; but I think it would be right and Christian-like i' thee, and that thou'd find thy comfort in thinking on it after. If thou'd only go, and see his wistful eyes—I think they'd plead wi' thee, more than his words, or mine either."

"I tell thee my flesh and blood wasn't made for forgiving and forgetting. Once for all, thou must take my word. When I love I love, and when I hate I hate; and him as has done harm to me, or

to mine, I may keep fra' striking or murdering, but I'll niver forgive. I should be just a monster, fit to be shown at a fair, if I could forgive him as got feyther hanged."

Philip was silent, thinking what more he could urge.

"Yo'd better be off," said Sylvia, in a minute or two. "Yo' and me has got wrong, and it'll take a night's sleep to set us right. Yo've said all yo' can for him; and perhaps it's not yo' as is to blame, but yo'r nature. But I'm put out wi' thee, and want thee out o' my sight for awhile."

One or two more speeches of this kind convinced him that it would be wise in him to take her at her word. He went back to Simpson, and found him, though still alive, past the understanding of any words of human forgiveness. Philip had almost wished he had not troubled or irritated Sylvia by urging the dying man's request: the performance of this duty seemed now to have been such a useless office.

After all, the performance of a duty is never a useless office, though we may not see the consequences, or they may be quite different to what we expected or calculated on. In the pause of active work, when daylight was done, and the evening

shades came on, Sylvia had time to think: and her heart grew sad and soft, in comparison to what it had been, when Philip's urgency had called out all her angry opposition. She thought of her father—his sharp passions, his frequent forgiveness, or rather his forgetfulness that he had even been injured. All Sylvia's persistent or enduring qualities were derived from her mother, her impulses from her father. It was her dead father whose example filled her mind this evening in the soft and tender twilight. She did not say to herself that she would go and tell Simpson that she forgave him; but she thought that if Philip asked her again that she should do so.

But when she saw Philip again he told her that Simpson was dead; and passed on from what he had reason to think would be an unpleasant subject to her. Thus he never learnt how her conduct might have been more gentle and relenting than her words —words which came up into his memory at a future time, with full measure of miserable significance.

In general, Sylvia was gentle and good enough; but Philip wanted her to be shy and tender with him, and this she was not. She spoke to him, her pretty eyes looking straight and composedly at him. She consulted him like the family friend that he was:

she met him quietly in all the arrangements for the time of their marriage, which she looked upon more as a change of home, as the leaving of Haytersbank, as it would affect her mother, than in any more directly personal way. Philip was beginning to feel, though not as yet to acknowledge, that the fruit he had so inordinately longed for was but of the nature of an apple of Sodom.

Long ago, lodging in widow Rose's garret, he had been in the habit of watching some pigeons that were kept by a neighbour; the flock disported themselves on the steep tiled roofs just opposite to the attic window, and insensibly Philip grew to know their ways, and one pretty soft little dove was somehow perpetually associated in his mind with his idea of his cousin Sylvia. The pigeon would sit in one particular place sunning herself, and puffing out her feathered breast, with all the blue and rose-coloured lights gleaming in the morning rays, cooing softly to herself, as she dressed her plumage. Philip fancied that he saw the same colours in a certain piece of shot silk—now in the shop; and none other seemed to him so suitable for his darling's wedding-dress. He carried enough to make a gown and gave it to her one evening, as she sate on the grass just outside the house, half attending to her mother, half engaged

in knitting stockings for her scanty marriage outfit. He was glad that the sun was not gone down, thus allowing him to display the changing colours in fuller light. Sylvia admired it duly; even Mrs. Robson was pleased and attracted by the soft yet brilliant hues. Philip whispered to Sylvia—(he took delight in whispers,—she, on the contrary, always spoke to him in her usual tone of voice)

"Thou'lt look so pretty in it, sweetheart,—o' Thursday fortnight!"

"Thursday fortnight. On the fourth yo're thinking on. But I cannot wear it then,—I shall be i' black."

"Not on that day, sure!" said Philip.

"Why not? There's nought t' happen on that day for t' make me forget feyther. I couldn't put off my black, Philip,—no, not to save my life! Yon silk is just lovely, far too good for the likes of me,—and I'm sure I'm much beholden to yo'; and I'll have it made up first of any gown after last April come two years,—but, oh, Philip, I cannot put off my mourning!"

"Not for our wedding-day!" said Philip, sadly.

"No, lad, I really cannot. I'm just sorry about it, for I see thou'rt set upon it; and thou'rt so kind and good, I sometimes think I can niver be thankful enough

to thee. When I think on what would ha' become of mother and me if we hadn't had thee for a friend i' need, I'm noane ungrateful, Philip; tho' I sometimes fancy thou'rt thinking I am."

"I don't want yo' to be grateful, Sylvie," said poor Philip, dissatisfied, yet unable to explain what he did want; only knowing that there was something he lacked, yet fain would have had.

As the marriage-day drew near, all Sylvia's care seemed to be for her mother; all her anxiety was regarding the appurtenances of the home she was leaving. In vain Philip tried to interest her in details of his improvements or contrivances in the new home to which he was going to take her. She did not tell him; but the idea of the house behind the shop was associated in her mind with two times of discomfort and misery. The first time she had gone into the parlour about which Philip spoke so much was at the time of the press-gang riot, when she had fainted from terror and excitement; the second was on that night of misery when she and her mother had gone in to Monkshaven, to bid her father farewell before he was taken to York: in that room, on that night, she had first learnt something of the fatal peril in which he stood. She could not show the bright shy curiosity about her future dwelling

that is common enough with girls who are going to be married. All she could do was to restrain herself from sighing, and listen patiently, when he talked on the subject. In time he saw that she shrank from it; so he held his peace, and planned and worked for her in silence,—smiling to himself as he looked on each completed arrangement for her pleasure or comfort; and knowing well that her happiness was involved in what fragments of peace and material comfort might remain to her mother.

The wedding-day drew near apace. It was Philip's plan that after they had been married in Kirk Moorside Church, he and his Sylvia, his cousin, his love, his wife, should go for the day to Robin Hood's Bay, returning in the evening to the house behind the shop in the market-place. There they were to find Bell Robson installed in her future home; for Haytersbank Farm was to be given up to the new tenant on the very day of the wedding; Sylvia would not be married any sooner; she said that she must stay there till the very last; and had said it with such determination that Philip had desisted from all urgency at once.

He had told her that all should be settled for her mother's comfort during their few hours' absence; otherwise Sylvia would not have gone at all. He

told her he should ask Hester, who was always so good and kind,—who never yet had said him nay, to go to church with them as bridesmaid,—for Sylvia would give no thought or care to anything but her mother,—and that they would leave her at Haytersbank as they returned from church; she would manage Mrs. Robson's removal,—she would do this—do that—do everything. Such friendly confidence had Philip in Hester's willingness and tender skill. Sylvia acquiesced at length, and Philip took upon himself to speak to Hester on the subject.

"Hester," said he, one day when he was preparing to go home after the shop was closed; "would yo' mind stopping a bit? I should like to show yo' the place now it's done up; and I've a favour to ask on yo' besides." He was so happy he did not see her shiver all over. She hesitated just a moment before she answered,

"I'll stay, if thou wishes it, Philip. But I'm no judge o' fashions and such like."

"Thou'rt a judge o' comfort, and that's what I've been aiming at. I were niver so comfortable in a' my life as when I were a lodger at thy house," said he, with brotherly tenderness in his tone. "If my mind had been at ease I could ha' said I niver were

happier in all my days than under thy roof; and I know it were thy doing for the most part. So come along, Hester, and tell me if there's aught more I can put in for Sylvie."

It might not have been a very appropriate text, but such as it was the words, "From him that would ask of thee turn not thou away," seemed the only source of strength that could have enabled her to go patiently through the next half-hour. As it was, she unselfishly brought all her mind to bear upon the subject; admired this, thought and decided upon that, as one by one Philip showed her all his alterations and improvements. Never was such a quiet little bit of unconscious and unrecognized heroism. She really ended by such a conquest of self that she could absolutely sympathize with the proud expectant lover, and had quenched all envy of the beloved, in sympathy with the delight she imagined Sylvia must experience when she discovered all these proofs of Philip's fond consideration and care. But it was a great strain on the heart, that source of life; and when Hester returned into the parlour after her deliberate survey of the house, she felt as weary and depressed in bodily strength as if she had gone through an illness of many days. She sate down on the nearest chair and felt as though she never could

rise again. Philip, joyous and content, stood near her talking.

"And, Hester," said he, "Sylvie has given me a message for thee,—she says thou must be her bridesmaid,—she'll have none other."

"I cannot," said Hester, with sudden sharpness.

"Oh, yes, but yo' must. It wouldn't be like my wedding if thou wasn't there,—why, I've looked upon thee as a sister iver since I came to lodge with thy mother."

Hester shook her head. Did her duty require her not to turn away from this asking too? Philip saw her reluctance, and, by intuition rather than reason, he knew that what she would not do for gaiety or pleasure she would consent to, if by so doing she could render any service to another. So he went on.

"Besides, Sylvie and me has planned to go for our wedding jaunt to Robin Hood's Bay. I ha' been to engage a shandry this very morn, before t' shop was opened,—and there's no one to leave wi' my aunt; th' poor old body is sore crushed with sorrow; and is, as one may say, childish at times; she's to come down here, that we may find her when we come back at night; and there's niver a one she'll come with so willing and so happy as with thee, Hester,—Sylvie and me has both said so."

Hester looked up in his face with her grave honest eyes.

"I cannot go to church wi' thee, Philip; and thou must not ask me any further. But I'll go betimes to Haytersbank Farm, and I'll do my best to make the old lady happy, and to follow out thy directions in bringing her here before nightfall."

Philip was on the point of urging her afresh to go with them to church; but something in her eyes brought a thought across his mind, as transitory as a breath passes over a looking-glass, and he desisted from his entreaty, and put away his thought as a piece of vain coxcombry, insulting to Hester. He passed rapidly on to all the careful directions rendered necessary by her compliance with the latter part of his request, coupling Sylvia's name with his perpetually; so that Hester looked upon her as a happy girl, as eager in planning all the details of her marriage as though no heavy shameful sorrow had passed over her head not many months ago.

Hester did not see Sylvia's white, dreamy, resolute face, that answered the solemn questions of the marriage service in a voice that did not seem her own. Hester was not with them to notice the heavy abstraction that made the bride as if unconscious of her husband's loving words, and then start and

smile, and reply with a sad gentleness of tone. No! Hester's duty lay in conveying the poor widow and mother down from Haytersbank to the new home in Monkshaven; and for all Hester's assistance and thoughtfulness, it was a dreary, painful piece of work —the poor old woman crying like a child, with bewilderment at the confused bustle which, in spite of all Sylvia's careful forethought, could not be avoided on this final day, when her mother had to be carried away from the homestead over which she had so long presided. But all this was as nothing to the distress which overwhelmed poor Bell Robson when she entered Philip's house; the parlour—the whole place so associated with the keen agony she had undergone there, that the stab of memory penetrated through her deadened senses, and brought her back to misery. In vain Hester tried to console her by telling her the fact of Sylvia's marriage with Philip in every form of words that occurred to her. Bell only remembered her husband's fate, which filled up her poor wandering mind, and coloured everything; insomuch that Sylvia not being at hand to reply to her mother's cry for her, the latter imagined that her child, as well as her husband, was in danger of trial and death, and refused to be comforted by any endeavour of the patient sympathizing Hester.

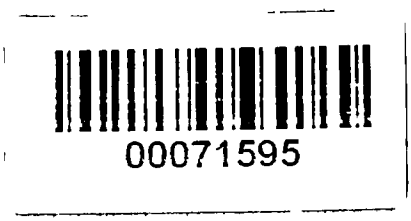
In a pause of Mrs. Robson's sobs, Hester heard the welcome sound of the wheels of the returning shandry, bearing the bride and bridegroom home. It stopped at the door—an instant, and Sylvia, white as a sheet at the sound of her mother's wailings, which she had caught while yet at a distance, with the quick ears of love, came running in; her mother feebly rose and tottered towards her, and fell into her arms, saying, "Oh! Sylvie, Sylvie, take me home, and away from this cruel place!"

Hester could not but be touched with the young girl's manner to her mother—as tender, as protecting as if their relation to each other had been reversed, and she was lulling and tenderly soothing a wayward, frightened child. She had neither eyes nor ears for any one till her mother was sitting in trembling peace, holding her daughter's hand tight in both of hers, as if afraid of losing sight of her; then Sylvia turned to Hester, and, with the sweet grace which is a natural gift to some happy people, thanked her; in common words enough she thanked her, but in that nameless manner, and with that strange, rare charm which made Hester feel as if she had never been thanked in all her life before; and from that time forth she understood, if she did not always

yield to, the unconscious fascination which Sylvia could exercise over others at times.

Did it enter into Philip's heart to perceive that he had wedded his long-sought bride in mourning raiment, and that the first sounds which greeted them as they approached their home were those of weeping and wailing?

END OF VOL. II.



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